

BLACK & COAL RED BANDANAS

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA MINE WARS

STORY
RAYMOND
TYLER
ART
SUMMER
McCLINTON
EDITED BY
PAUL
BUHLE
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
GORDON SIMMONS &
SHAUN SLIFER



“It is past time to use the unique attributes of graphic arts to tell the remarkable story of the West Virginia Mine Wars. *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* applies the stark colors of its title to allow the reader to visualize the world in which it is set.”

—Denise Giardina, author of *Storming Heaven*

★

“*Black Coal and Red Bandanas* excels at delivering history through the unique narrative strengths of comics. By emphasizing character-driven drama at the heart of an expansive movement, Tyler and McClinton convey decades of struggle with humanity and clarity.”

—Nate Powell, illustrator of the *March* trilogy and *Lies My Teacher Told Me: A Graphic Adaptation*

★

“*Black Coal and Red Bandanas* is an accessible and inspiring piece of labor history chronicling the stories of ordinary West Virginians who rose in pursuit of justice. Thoughtfully written narrative joins rich artwork to present the saga of Blair Mountain in a way that will captivate readers of any age or background.”

—Elizabeth Catte, author of *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*

★

“An immensely important addition to the labor canon, *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* brings readers right into the thick of the Mine Wars’ hidden history, when working people of various creeds and colors banded together to fight the ‘thug rule’ of industrial overlords who valued profit over human life. An empowering story for our times.”

—Taylor Brown, author of *Rednecks*

★

“This is an exciting addition to the literature about a key period of US history. The sport of ignoring—even suppressing—labor history has just gotten tougher for those who wish it to remain hidden.”

—Ginny Savage Ayers, coauthor of *Never Justice, Never Peace: Mother Jones and the Miner Rebellion at Paint and Cabin Creeks*

★

“One of the enormous holes in the US school curriculum is the history of working people and working-class struggle. Through compelling illustrations and storytelling, *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* alerts young people—and all the rest of us—to one of the most significant periods of US labor history. This book is a gift to educators who want our students to learn a fuller, more accurate story of this country.”

—Bill Bigelow, curriculum editor of Rethinking Schools and codirector of the Zinn Education Project

“This enthralling graphic history effectively takes us back to an earlier era with you-are-there intensity, handsome art, and authentic dialogue. The heroically radical Mother Jones is, alone, worth the price of admission. You will not regret time spent reliving this forgotten history and may see its relevance today, no matter which side of the political spectrum you identify with.”

—Jay Kinney, editor of *Anarchy Comics*

★

“If you want to get a first taste of the struggles of American workers, *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* is a great place to start. You’ll learn about the conditions that led coal miners to revolt, how they organized, and how they conducted one of the most militant struggles in labor history—all revealed through dramatic imagery and vivid storytelling.”

—Jeremy Brecher, author of *Strike!*

★

“I hope this detailed graphic treatment introduces a new audience to one of the most militant labor struggles in the history of the US. Highlighting the contribution of Black miners, and how workers teamed up to fight the bosses instead of each other, *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* might just be the graphic novel we need right now.”

—Josh MacPhee, cofounder of Justseeds Artists’ Cooperative and Interference Archive

★

“This book opens up a visual portal into an otherwise inaccessible space and time—a portal that rich and powerful people have tried to seal shut for over a century. *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* is an accessible, exciting, and beautifully rendered celebration of one of the most suppressed and inspiring moments in US history.”

—Sam Wallman, author of *Our Members Be Unlimited:*

A Comic about Workers and Their Unions

★

“*Black Coal and Red Bandanas* vividly tells the story of the dramatic face-off between American workers and the coal barons, along with their police forces, private detective provocateurs, and gun thugs. The West Virginia Mine Wars drew the lines clearly. Which side are you on?”

—Susan Simensky Bietila, *World War 3 Illustrated* collective member and contributor to *Wobblies! A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*

★

“As their lamps were beacons of life underground, their bandanas became beacons of courage on the surface. *Black Coal and Red Bandanas* brings that tenacious spirit to life in this recounting of one of America’s fiercest and longest labor struggles. Coal companies tried to bury these two decades of struggle along with countless bodies, but thanks to this book they will live on.”

—Mitch Troutman, author of *The Bootleg Coal Rebellion: The*

Pennsylvania Miners Who Seized an Industry, 1925–1942

Black Coal and Red Bandanas

Raymond Tyler

Illustrated by Summer McClinton

Edited by Paul Buhle

Introduction by Shaun Slifer

Foreword by Gordon Simmons



Black Coal and Red Bandanas: An Illustrated History of the West Virginia Mine Wars
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ISBN: 979-8-88744-059-0 (paperback)
ISBN: 979-8-88744-068-2 (ebook)
Library of Congress Control Number: 2024930533
Cover by Summer McClinton
Interior design by briandesign

Map of Paint and Cabin Creeks on page 49 by Ned Savage. Created for *Never Justice, Never Peace: Mother Jones and the Miner Rebellion at Paint and Cabin Creeks* by Lon Kelly Savage and Ginny Savage Ayers (WVU, Press 2018).

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PM Press
PO Box 23912
Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org

Printed in the USA.

To Shelby
—R.T.

To Greg and Oscar
—S.M.

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Foreword

Gordon Simmons

The true story told in this book lay buried and hidden for half a century in the hills of West Virginia after the events that are recounted had occurred. For decades, thousands of students required by law to study the state's history in its public schools heard not a whisper about the West Virginia Mine Wars that stretched from 1912 to 1921. It made no difference that the Mine Wars constituted some of the most dramatic strikes and, arguably, the largest workers' insurrection against capitalist domination and state power in American history.

When they were happening, the Mine Wars were reported in newspapers across the nation, and there were detailed journalist accounts, especially in the radical periodicals of the day. Even then, however, the attempt to whitewash and cover up that history had started, as when local authorities seized and destroyed the printing presses of local newspapers sympathetic to the miners' struggle. The repressed memories of unresolved conflicts can resurface, and that is what happened with the history of the Mine Wars.

Beginning with the publication of mineworkers' union activist Fred Mooney's memoir *Struggle in the Coal Fields* in 1967, followed by former judge Howard Lee's sensationalist and unreliable *Bloodletting in Appalachia* in 1969—both issued by local publishers with limited distribution—gradually books began to appear on the subject. It was, however, only after the renewed struggle of the Black Lung Association, Miners for Democracy and the wildcat strikes of the late 1960s and the 1970s swept across the coalfields and the United Mine Workers of America that the recovery of this lost history began in a significant way.

In 1981, historian David Alan Corbin published the first comprehensive treatment of the Mine Wars in *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922*. That was followed in 1984 by veteran journalist Lon K. Savage's *Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War 1920–21*, a book described by novelist and creative writing professor Chuck Kinder as “one of the best books I have read in my lifetime.” Additional historical works have followed, including Robert Shogan's *The Battle of Blair Mountain: The Story of America's Largest Labor Uprising* (2004), William Blizzard's *When Miners March* (2010), Corbin's *Gun Thugs, Rednecks, and Radicals: A Documentary History of the West Virginia Mine Wars* (2011), James Green's *The Devil Is Here in These Hills: West Virginia's Coal*

Miners and Their Battle for Freedom (2015) and *Never Justice, Never Peace: Mother Jones and the Miner Rebellion at Paint and Cabin Creeks* (2018) by Lon K. Savage and Ginny Savage Ayers.

In 1980, the highly regarded West Virginia novelist Mary Lee Settle had used the historical background of the Mine Wars for her novel *The Scapegoat*, which, although fictional, was told in the voice of Mother Jones, the organizer and agitator who played a significant role throughout the Mine Wars period. The trail-blazing historical work by Corbin and Savage set the stage for further literary and cinematic reception of the West Virginia Mine Wars. In 1985, the documentary film *Even the Heavens Weep* was first broadcast. Then, in 1987, renowned filmmaker John Sayles released a feature-length movie, *Matewan*, to great critical acclaim. That same year a novel, *Storming Heaven*, by West Virginia novelist Denise Giardina, was published and received both the Weatherford and Lillian Smith book awards. In 2016, an episode titled “The Mine Wars” in the *American Experience* documentary series debuted.

All that is not to say the attempted erasure of West Virginia’s working-class history was at an end. In 2011, a decade-long struggle began between the coal industry, determined to physically destroy the historic site of the Blair Mountain battleground, and residents of West Virginia, determined to preserve the mountain and its surroundings. Frank Keeney, along with Fred Mooney, had been at the forefront of the early twentieth-century Mine Wars as a local activist in the UMWA. Local historian Chuck Keeney, his great-grandson, was later at the forefront of the movement to save Blair Mountain from the dynamite and bulldozers, and wrote the definitive account of that struggle, *The Road to Blair Mountain: Saving a Mine Wars Battlefield from King Coal* (2021).

Almost a century after the struggle between West Virginia workers and the social and economic forces that dominate their lives erupted into the Mine Wars, another strike wave swept the state. This time it was the overworked and underpaid employees of the public education system—teachers, school bus drivers, cooks, maintenance, groundskeepers, aides, and other support staff—who rose up against their fiscal and political masters to assert their dignity and freedom.

In early 2018, public school employees, nominally divided by membership into three separate unions, defied both state authority and their own

organizational leadership to engage in a massive illegal wildcat strike that closed every public school in the state for nine days to protest low pay and cuts to health insurance benefits. It was the first statewide strike since 1990 and it ended with the teachers winning a 5 percent pay raise. It inspired a wave of teachers' wildcat strikes in other states, helping to restore West Virginia's place as one of the nation's labor strongholds. The government that had for decades suppressed the teaching of the state's history of class struggle now found in those same classrooms the site of renewed class struggle.

That historical resonance was not lost on the striking public education workers. On picket lines throughout the communities of West Virginia, strikers donned the red bandana handkerchief as the symbol of their defiance of authority, the same symbol adopted by thousands of striking coal miners who in 1921 had marched on Blair Mountain in their struggle to liberate themselves from the dominance of the coal industry and the political bosses under their control.

In the 2018 school strike, and again in a 2019 strike, public education workers won demands for better pay, not only for themselves but for almost all public employees across the state.

One of the enduring lessons from Blair Mountain, however, is that the struggle must and will continue, and not all historical moments count as definitive defeats or victories. Since 2019, the political bosses have retaliated by enacting antilabor legislation that undermines union membership: a right-to-work law, cessation of union dues check-off, added penalties for striking, and the gutting of an already inadequate employee grievance procedure. In one history lesson of resistance taught in every school, however, is a mention of the state motto, *Montani semper liberi*: Mountaineers are always free.

Gordon Simmons is a retired union organizer and is president of the West Virginia Labor History Association. He is now employed as a public defense investigator and an adjunct professor at Marshall University.

In Matewan, a Museum from Below

Shaun Slifer

When we first opened the doors of the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum to the public in a small storefront in Matewan in 2015, I didn't know how long we'd last.

Such is the power of the coal industry in the southern part of West Virginia. Bituminous coal and the work of mining it from the earth are deeply woven into the fabric of Appalachian culture in the coalfield areas.

There's pride in that work, which often spans generations, and there's also industry propaganda. Sometimes the two become inter-

twined in a toxic mix that begins to manifest as something like a religion. When that happens, anything which complicates the narratives put forth by industry and its front groups and public relations operatives stands a good chance of coming under sustained attack. I wasn't worried that we would be unable to raise the rent money for each month or that we wouldn't eventually find a regional (and eventually national) foothold of support, although those things certainly took time to develop. I was worried that "they," the coal industry and its supporters, would just find a way to shut us down entirely.

There was a clear precedent behind my worry: the precursor to the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum was the Blair Community Center and Museum, a kind of people's interpretive center in an old church that simultaneously functioned as a convergence space for the militant, direct-action elements of the movement against mountaintop removal strip mining (MTR) that grew steadily in the region in the early 2000s.¹ The Blair Center was in one of the few remaining buildings in the town of Blair itself, at the base of Blair Mountain in the southern part of the thirteen-mile ridgeline known as Spruce Fork Ridge, where the Battle of Blair Mountain erupted in late summer of 1921.

The center was inaugurated soon after the 2011 march on Blair Mountain, which saw several hundred activists marching in the brutal summer sun for five days along the historic route that armed unionist miners wove through the mountains nearly one hundred years before. The organizers of the 2011 march worked to fuse history, environmental activism, and organized labor to bring focus to the effort to save Blair Mountain itself from strip mining, bringing attention to the broader anti-MTR



Detail from the *Battle of Blair Mountain* exhibit, West Virginia Mine Wars Museum.
Photo by Shaun Slifer.



struggle in Appalachia. Building off the momentum of this march, and the brief media attention around this struggle for both memory and the literal preservation of the land itself, the Blair Center grappled with unique internal stresses and scarcity of resources. Concerned with the legitimate threat of vandalism or sabotage of their rented building, the activists kept their own security personnel present on most nights, and eventually some moved into the center as consistent residents so that the building never went unattended. This only compounded festering conflicts within the group maintaining the project, and the Blair Community Center and Museum closed in April 2012, less than a year after it opened. As backdrop to all of this, beginning in the early 2000s and ongoing today, coal companies have been quietly buying up any available properties in and around the town of Blair, emptying them of buildings (if not already vacated), and effectively erasing the history of the town through silent atrophy and neglect.²

In Matewan, just a few years later, I believed we might only have a few months, maybe a year, before we caused too much of a ripple and someone bought our aging storefront from the absentee Rotary Club owners and put

all of our work out on the street, just like they used to evict unionist miners from company housing one hundred years before. We had an amazing team of people working on the project, but it wasn't otherwise easy to gauge public sentiment in town, and the town government at that time was directly adversarial to new ideas (or, really, *any* ideas). Matewan is also the home turf of modern-day coal baron Don Blankenship, who demands a particular fealty from many in the region. While we were building out our storefront museum, Blankenship often showed up to scope out our progress during the period when he was court-ordered to remain in Mingo County awaiting trial for his role in the Upper Big Branch explosion that killed twenty-nine miners in 2010. (He would eventually serve a short prison sentence for conspiring to violate federal mine safety standards.) Perhaps the only history museum to involve union workers in every step of our founding and operation, we were building a deep connection to the United Mine Workers (UMWA) Local 1440, the local in Matewan which Blankenship had worked hard to dismantle since the strike against his company, Massey Energy, in 1983. Despite 1440's progressive leadership and steadfast support, it felt like we were setting ourselves up for potential backlash and opposition.

But we built the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum anyway, and "they" never did manage to shut us down.

★

Beyond a few intrepid teachers, the history of organized labor is hardly taught in American public schools at all, because it isn't really authorized to fit into the national story we're supposed to understand about the United States. Labor has involved remarkable struggles for basic human rights, for dignity and justice, and it has more often than not involved the work of Communists, socialists, and anarchists, of the multiethnic working class in a brutally race-divided country working together for common benefit. Unions aren't flawless, and they take vigilance to maintain, but they can be fields for the development of true solidarity across the divisions of class, race, and gender. This history involves so many baseline challenges to industrial supremacy, to the core tenets of capitalism, to the absolute sacking of the land itself in the interests of "progress," that going into any depth with public school students would be to risk exposing them to ideas about the potentials inherent in a leveled, just society that would be

flat-out dangerous to the contemporary capitalist status quo. So, if you didn't already grow up in a union family, and you aren't working in a unionized job, chances are you don't really know much about what organized labor is or the history of it, and you can hardly be blamed for that.

When we're talking about the Mine Wars in West Virginia, we're talking about a period that starts roughly around 1900 and ends, depending on who you ask, with the dissolution of the Battle of Blair Mountain in the late summer of 1921 and the subsequent treason trials the following spring. They were "wars" in many ways of thinking about the word: battles over ideology, fights for unionization of a deeply privatized regional extraction industry, acts of coordinated workplace sabotage, open shootouts in broad daylight, gun-running and guerilla warfare in the Appalachian woodlands. It's remarkable how little known these events actually are nationally, in particular the Battle of Blair Mountain, which saw upwards of ten thousand unionist coal miners in a pitched battle against hundreds of vigilante fighters and State Police along a thirteen-mile, densely forested ridgeline for nearly a week. That "coal war" in the southern part of West Virginia was national news at the time, making headlines daily. The tension in the nation after the First World War, the Great Influenza epidemic, and continued international upheaval was such that even the relatively new US Army Air Service was anxious enough to come in with lumbering Martin bombers and de Havilland reconnaissance planes, boasting about this new aerial technology and its assured ability to defend the supremacy of industry over the demands of the people. Order, it was clear, would need to be maintained at all costs, even if that meant the US military potentially dropping bombs on US citizens in West Virginia.

But even Howard Zinn, in his landmark *A People's History of the United States*, doesn't discuss the Mine Wars or the Battle of Blair Mountain. First published in 1980, Zinn's survey dates from a time when Appalachian scholars were only just beginning to publish about the Mine Wars, and John Sayles, Maggie Renzi, and Peggy Rajske had yet to create the historical fiction film *Matewan* (1987). I have to assume that even this mold-breaking people's historian had never heard about the West Virginia Mine Wars, because it's a startling omission in Zinn's book. But it goes to show that it took generations after the Mine Wars for these memories to resurface, for most Americans to learn about them for the first time, for even the people

whose great-grandparents participated to begin to speak openly about what happened and why.

★

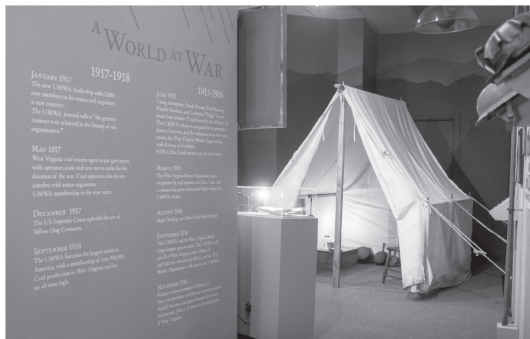
Since 2015, the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum has been growing during a time when history and memory of the land that we now call the United States has become hotly contested in public, in politics, and even in the news media. As I write, memory and mythology and justice all swirl in the weekly headlines in ways that still surprise me. Learning “people’s history” is suddenly cool, and consequently scares the crap out of a conservative old order as the dominant, previously accepted, and peculiarly white supremacist narrative of the USA that used to be their safe space continues to crumble away.

Building (and, crucially, maintaining) a people’s history museum in this context is a play for the long game. The memory of the Mine Wars in West Virginia originally survived through stories passed down, as our director Kenzie New Walker always says, over kitchen tables. It’s what a folklorist or anthropologist would call “oral tradition,” and what most cultures understand as the truth about ourselves, the way we know ourselves and how we pass that knowing forward. As founding board member and retired public school art teacher Wilma Steele says, “This [museum] is the first time that our people are in charge of our own history.” Being in charge, in this sense, means that we took steps to build on that kitchen-table storytelling to assert that this history has, in fact, enough power to warrant a people’s institution of sorts. It should be housed in a building that you can come and visit. Bring a whole class on a field trip, in fact. Let us show you the dignity that our great-grandparents fought for.

As we usually understand them, museums tell stories from above: ethnographic museums, for example, tell a story through trophies of cultural domination, colonialism, imperial triumph. Art museums tend toward the commercially successful, what has been collected by, or otherwise belonged to, the wealthy elite, and what particular critics historically lauded and particular curators continue to uphold. Whatever their goals, many museums may seem like they sprung fully formed from an unseen authority high above, and many in fact tell a story that replicates a seemingly “natural” hierarchy of cultures: a museum as a display of collections often serves as the functional boasting space for empire. Polling in the US regularly

shows that museums are trusted as deeply credible sources of truth in our culture at present, more so than most media outlets and state and federal governments. So what happens when people build a museum “from below”?³

Critical to the foundation of our museum is a kind of “people’s archaeology” and collecting practice centered almost entirely around the work of Kenny King, who worked as a mineral analyst in the coal industry for decades and taught himself how to use a metal detector and a single lens reflex camera in his spare time. Working almost always on his own since the early 1990s, Kenny has mapped and explored the battlefields and other key locations for anything and everything that could be considered evidence of the events we call the Mine Wars. Sometimes this work happened on coal company-owned lands: trespass, in other words, became a significant strategy for preserving history. It was trespass and the literal digging-out of the evidence of the 1921 battle that built the case that saved most of Blair Mountain from being entirely strip-mined for coal (although much of the battlefield area has already been destroyed by MTR, wiped from the landscape entirely). If the industry could reduce the understood significance of the area by simply denying anything important happened there, it would be easier for them to



Detail from the *Paint Creek & Cabin Creek Strikes* exhibit, featuring a period-accurate replica of a canvas tent, one of many styles the UMWA provided for evicted families to live in. Tent fabricated by Rebecca Susman, photo by Shaun Silfer.

bulldoze it unassailed. But Kenny's archaeological work, combined with the work of Harvard Ayers, Brandon Nida, and others, created significantly more robust understandings of the battle itself. Early stories about disorganized and amoral hillbillies shooting up a mountainside because they were ignorant of the unrealistic scope of their demands for justice were replaced with a complex narrative about a highly organized irregular army of unionist miners, many of them military veterans, who launched a significant assault on the coal industry after more than twenty years of trying every other channel to "redress" their laundry list of grievances. So it's no exaggeration to say that it actually matters who does the research, who does the digging in the dirt, and who does the collecting and interpretation of these objects. Kenny has been open and generous with his artifacts for years, only to have them locked away in storage at the large institutions he gifted to, or simply stolen from him by unscrupulous collectors. Giving a home and a stage to Kenny's tireless work is just one example of how we turn to the community, to the people who have been doing this preservation work since the beginning, to guide us forward. Kenny's work isn't token; it's foundational.

★

Sometimes I think about our museum in the context of the Letterist/Situationist tradition of *détournement*, where the "thing" as it exists, handed down from power, is subverted and re-presented under new authorship, usually with a satirical aim. The tone and color and shape of the original remain eerily similar but now proclaim a new narrative that challenges the power of the original, even mocks it. When we opened the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum, we performed something like a magic trick: we built a space in an empty storefront, and we called it a Museum without anyone's permission to do so, and because we looked and acted like a museum, we *became* one and *are* one. As we challenged the power of other museums which downplayed this history and built a museum that looked like theirs but told our own stories, we would assert our own power in turn. After all, why shouldn't Matewan have a museum that looked every bit as good as any big museum in a larger city? Through a slight-of-hand via design, we would take the language of museum-as-storytelling-space and reapply it to stories that had been disregarded and rerouted in the few institutions that even bothered to discuss them. A museum, from below. People needed

only to believe that the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum was a museum for it to become one, because it turned out we didn't really need anyone's permission in the first place.

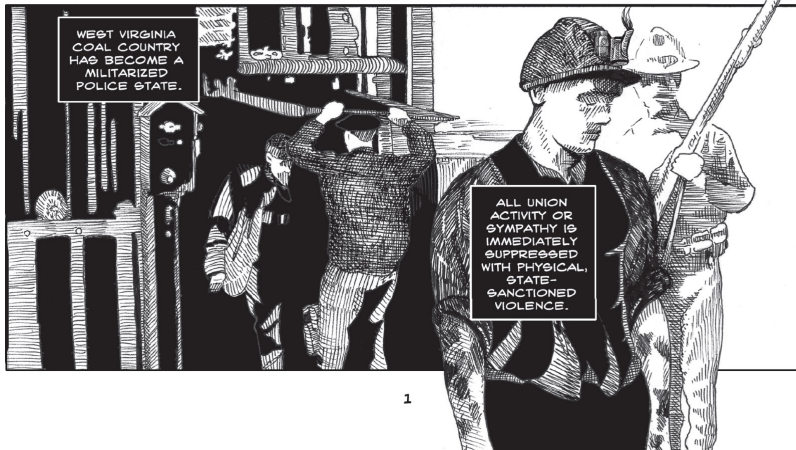
If a museum is one tool for storytelling, a book is another. This book, in fact, is the first graphic novel to ever tell the Mine Wars stories. Artists have been proving the value of "comics" for years: I first began learning about Palestine from Joe Sacco, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* books are now canon, and lately Sam Wallman is pushing the limits of the form with his narrative illustrations of the importance of working-class organizing and unions globally. I was honored to be invited to give feedback on early drafts of this book, and Raymond and Summer were very receptive: they wanted to get it right, and they did. Besides being a blast to read, the benefit of a richly illustrated book like this is that it makes you want to find out so much more, and I'm happy that the stories of Sid Hatfield, Mother Jones, Frank Keeney, and the coal miners who marched to Blair are finally emerging into the national consciousness.

When you've finished this book, share it with someone who needs it and go find out more. If you're close, come visit the museum in Matewan. We're here for the long haul now.

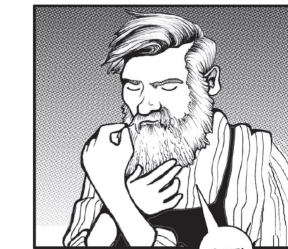
Shaun Sliffer is a multidisciplinary artist and nonfiction author based in Pittsburgh. He is the creative director at the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum and a founding member of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

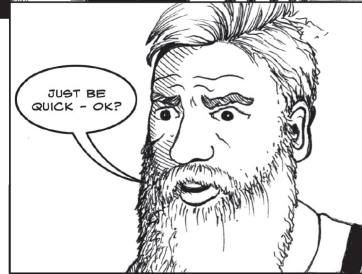
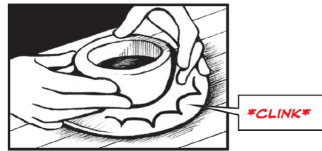
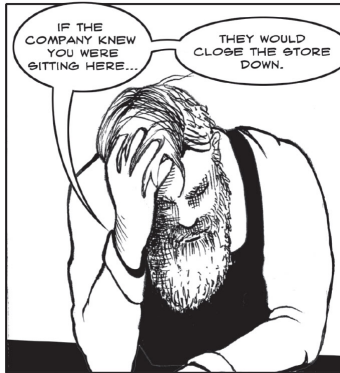
Notes

- 1 Surface mining for bituminous coal in central Appalachia isn't new, and organized and militant action against the practice in the region began as early as the 1960s.
- 2 This is a common strategy in the lead-up to a large surface-mining operation. Area residents will find themselves renting from vaguely named "land companies," which have purchased multiple contiguous properties and can then easily evict whole areas when it becomes profitable to strip-mine.
- 3 Something that frustrates me about contemporary dialogue around museums-as-problematic-spaces is that they are often described flatly as cultural spaces that need to be "held accountable" through a process of "decolonization," and this process is largely outlined as the hiring of new but equally professionalized curatorial and administrative staff who will, no doubt, still come to the table with terminal degrees from expensive schools. (In these imaginings, hardly anyone speaks of the lower-tier staff at all.) No doubt this will bring some elements of welcome change to existing institutions, but many of these ideas often take it as given that *only* large foundation-funded museums will *ever* exist, ignoring the reality of other museums built and maintained by communities themselves. Whether this is a lack of imagination or another instance of class blindness, I really can't tell.











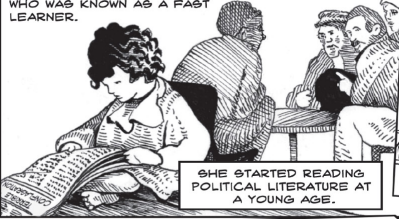
MOTHER JONES, ALSO KNOWN AS MARY G. HARRIS JONES, WAS BORN IN CORK, IRELAND, DURING THE GREAT FAMINE OR, AS THE BRITISH EMPIRE CALLED IT, "THE POTATO FAMINE."



HER FAMILY FLED IRELAND, HOPING TO START A BETTER LIFE IN THE US.



MOTHER JONES GREW UP AS AN IRISH WORKING-CLASS KID WHO WAS KNOWN AS A FAST LEARNER.

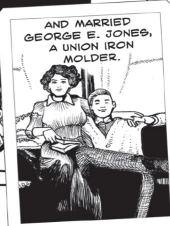


SHE STARTED READING POLITICAL LITERATURE AT A YOUNG AGE.

SHE BECAME A SCHOOL TEACHER IN MEMPHIS



AND MARRIED GEORGE E. JONES, A UNION IRON MOLDER.



MARY AND GEORGE HAD FOUR CHILDREN.

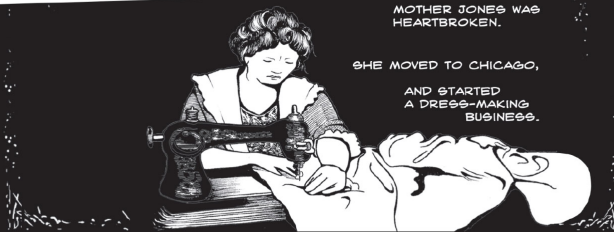
THE COUPLE SHARED AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN POLITICS AND JUSTICE.

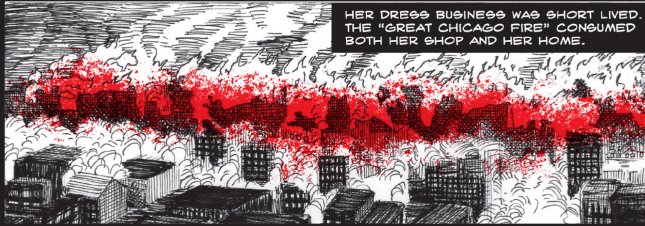


IN 1867, MOTHER JONES'S HUSBAND AND FOUR CHILDREN DIED OF YELLOW FEVER.

MOTHER JONES WAS HEARTBROKEN.

SHE MOVED TO CHICAGO, AND STARTED A DRESS-MAKING BUSINESS.





HER DRESS BUSINESS WAS SHORT LIVED. THE "GREAT CHICAGO FIRE" CONSUMED BOTH HER SHOP AND HER HOME.

THE YEAR WAS 1871. AT 34 YEARS OLD, MARY HARRIS HAD LOST THE LOVE OF HER LIFE, HER CHILDREN, HER HOME, AND HER BUSINESS THROUGH CRUEL, BRUTAL MISFORTUNE.

IT'S SAID THAT IN LIFE,
WE CAN SHRINK FROM PAIN...
OR RISE TO FACE IT.



I WILL PRAY
FOR THE
DEAD...

...AND FIGHT
LIKE HELL
FOR THE
LIVING.

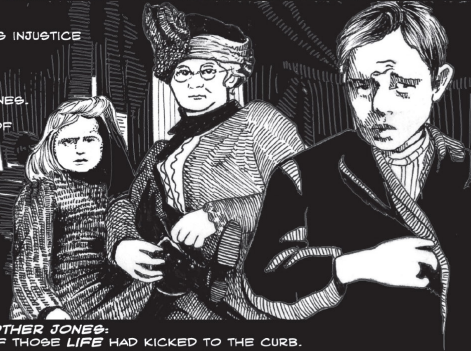
HER GREATEST ENEMY WAS INJUSTICE
AND SHE KNEW IT WELL.

SHE SAW IT IN THE FACES
OF CHILDREN WITH LIMBS
MANGLED BY WORK MACHINES.

SHE SAW IT IN THE EYES OF
MOTHERS WHOSE SONS
WERE CRUSHED TO DEATH
IN THE MINES.

THIS WASN'T SUFFERING
CAUSED BY RANDOM
MISFORTUNE.

THIS WAS CALCULATED,
DELIBERATE SUFFERING,
INSTIGATED BY GREED
AND PERPETRATED BY
THE POWERFUL.

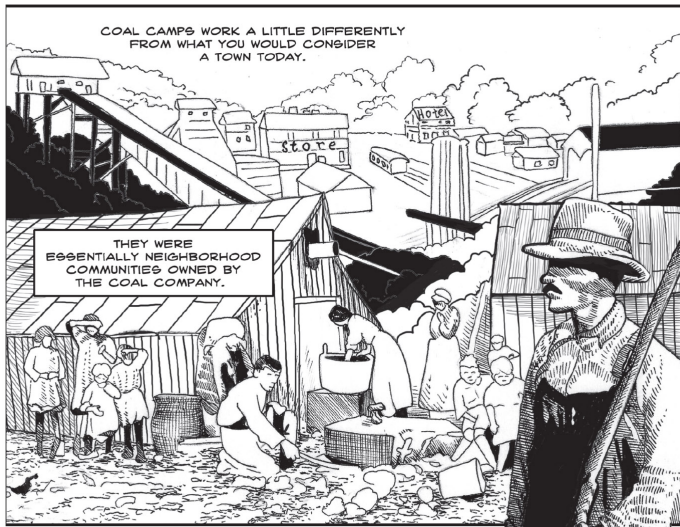


MARY HARRIS BECAME **MOTHER JONES**:
PASSIONATE DEFENDER OF THOSE **LIFE** HAD KICKED TO THE CURB.

A SELF-PROCLAIMED "HELL-RAISER," MOTHER JONES HAD NO PROBLEM STICKING UP FOR HERSELF AND OTHERS. OFTEN THE ONLY WOMAN ORGANIZING UNIONS, SHE FAMOUSLY SAID:

"NO MATTER WHAT THE FIGHT, DON'T BE LADYLIKE!
GOD ALMIGHTY MADE *WOMEN* AND THE ROCKEFELLER
GANG OF THIEVES MADE THE *LADIES*."

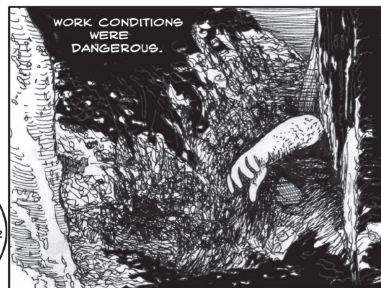


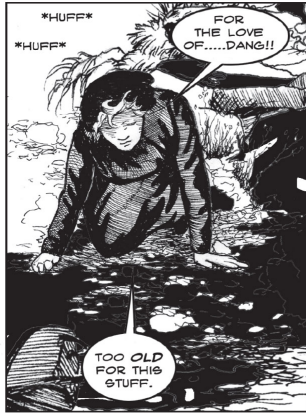
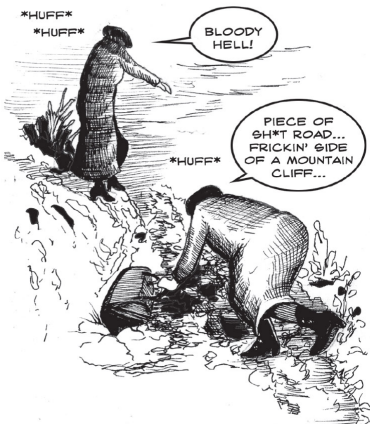
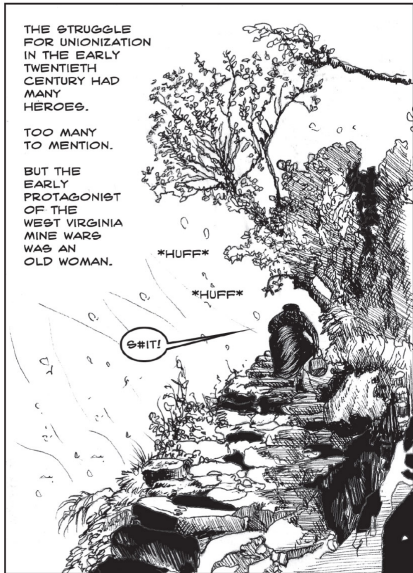


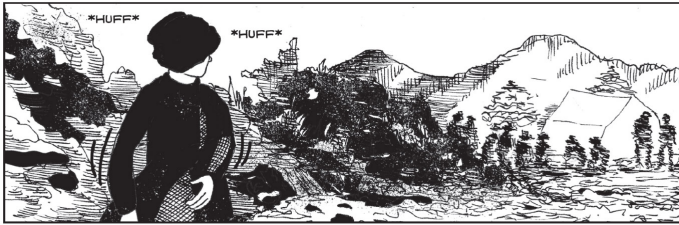
BECAUSE OF THIS, THE COMPANY COULD EFFECTIVELY
EVICT ANY WORKER WHO SO MUCH AS
QUESTIONED ITS AUTHORITY.





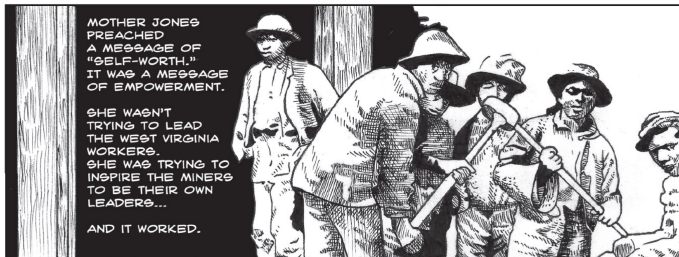
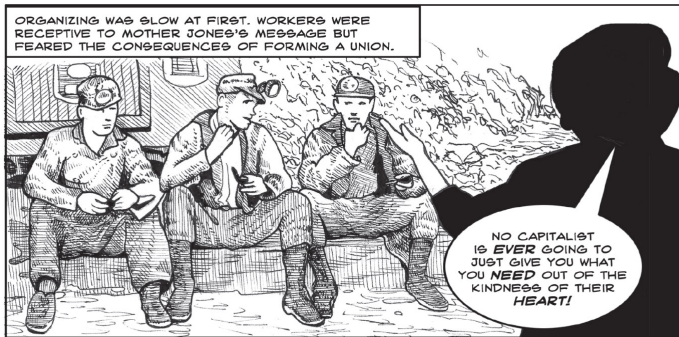


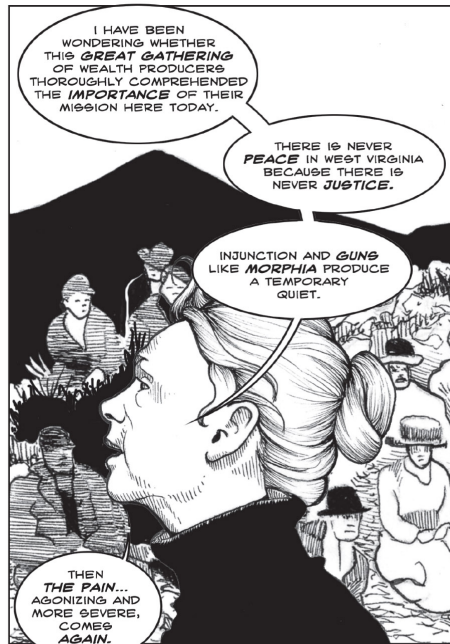


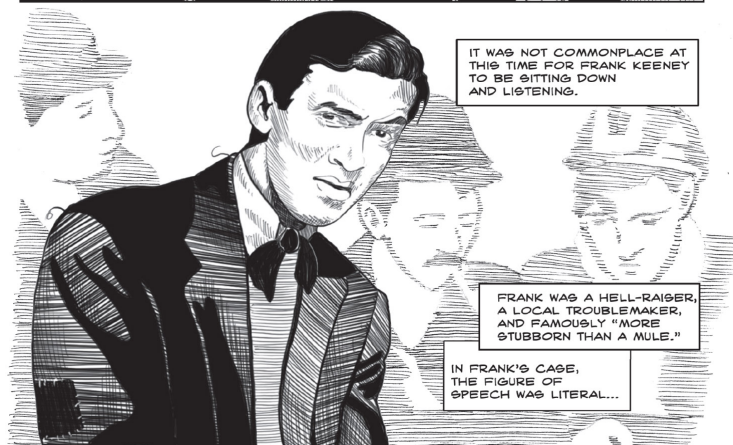






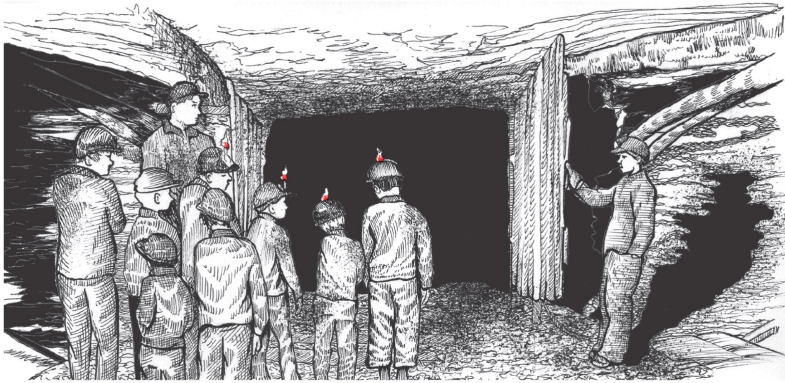






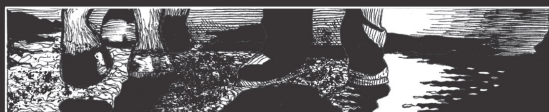
FRANK KEENEY'S STORY:







SHHK - SHK - KSSSHH



SHH..
EASY,
GIRL-



ROCKS RAINED
DOWN WITH
LOUD BANGS
AND CRACKS.
SCREAMS
FILLED THE
COLLAPSING
MINE SHAFT.
THE
MULE
SPOOKED
HARD,
SMASHING
FRANK
AGAINST
THE ROCK
WALL...

WHAM!!



FRANK
KEENEY
IS PINNED.

TRAPPED,
FRANTIC,

HE STRUGGLED

STRAINED -



BLACK
CLOUDS OF
SOOT FILLED
HIS NOSE
AND MOUTH.

A STINGING
PAIN RACED
ACROSS HIS
CHEST AS THE
MULE PRESSED
HARDER, REELING
BACK FROM
THE
FALLING
ROCKS.

IF THE MULE
DIDN'T MOVE,
THEY WOULD
BOTH DIE.

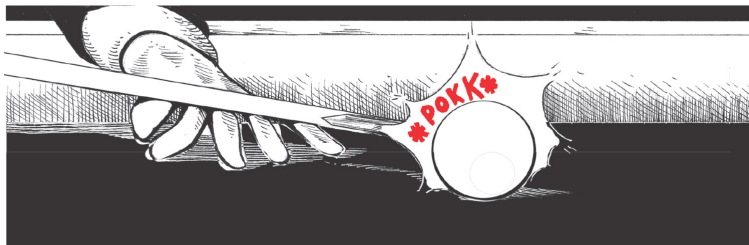
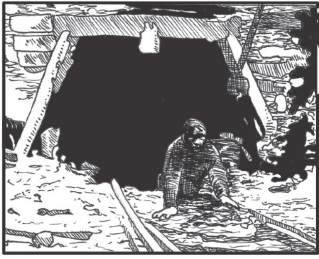


WITH THE
CRUSH OF DEATH UPON HIM,
AND WITH NO OPTIONS LEFT,
A DESPERATE FEROCITY
SEIZED FRANK...

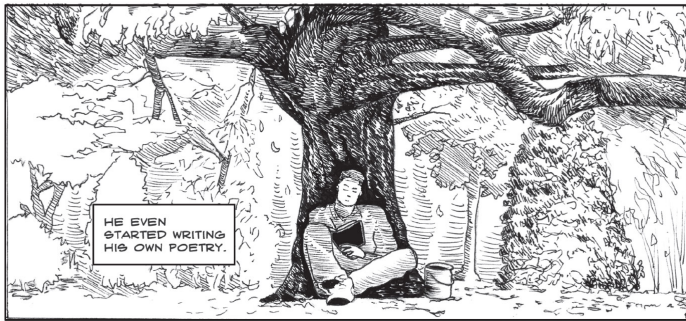
HE SANK HIS TEETH
INTO THE MULE'S EAR.
AND BIT IT OFF.
THE SUDDEN PAIN
SPURRED THE ANIMAL
INTO ACTION.

FRANK
ESCAPED.







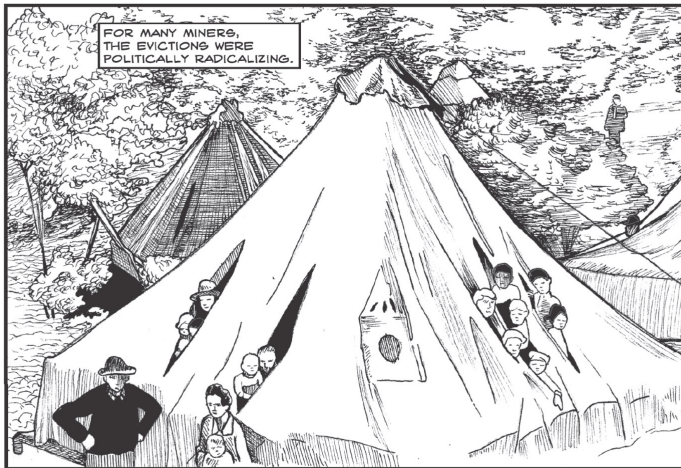
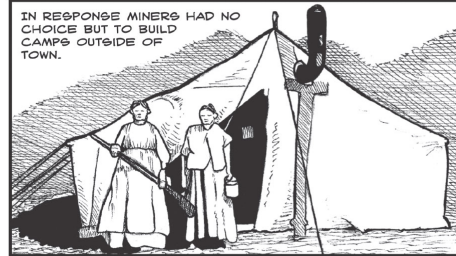




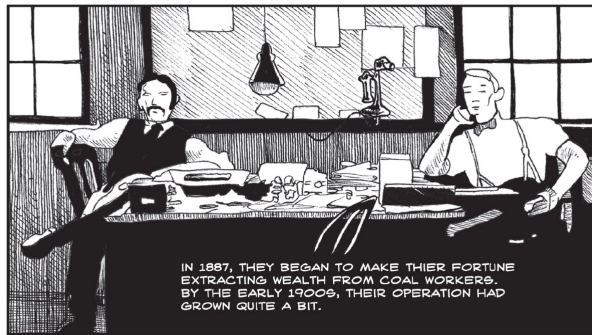
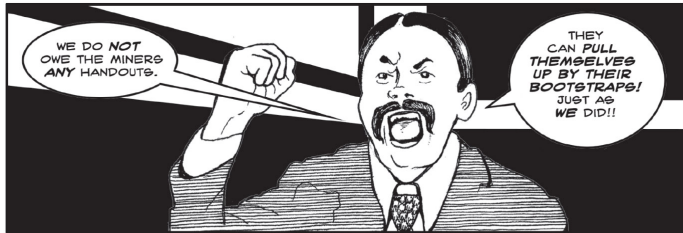
WINTER 1903

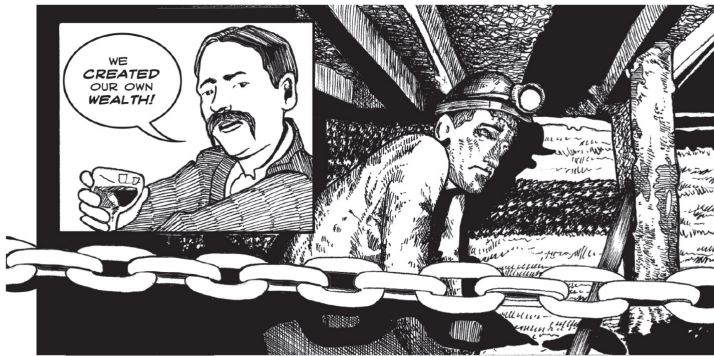
MINERS BEGAN TO WEAR RED BANDANAS AROUND THEIR NECKS TO SHOW THEY WERE FOR THE UNION. IT BECAME CLEAR TO THE COAL COMPANY THAT THE UNION TALK WASN'T GOING AWAY.

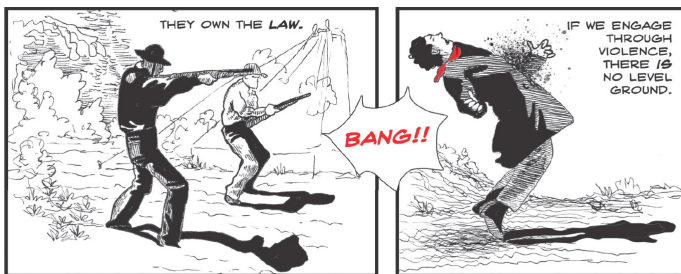
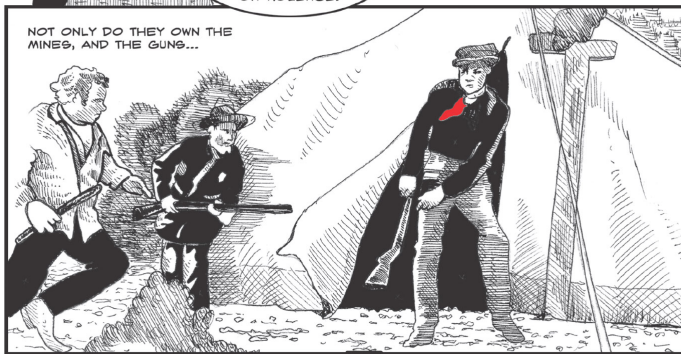
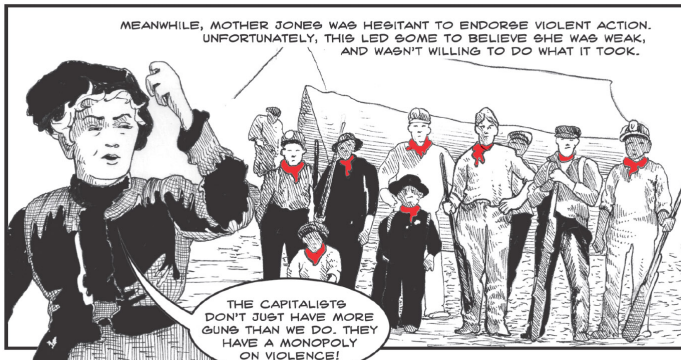


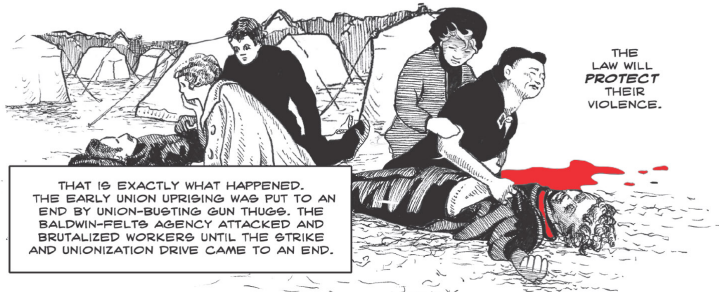
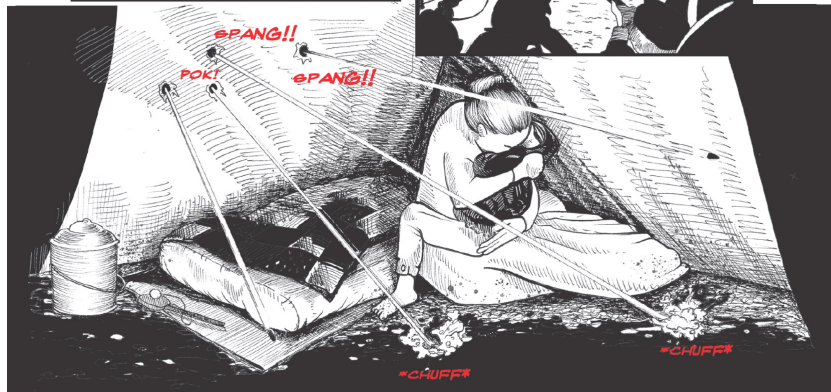
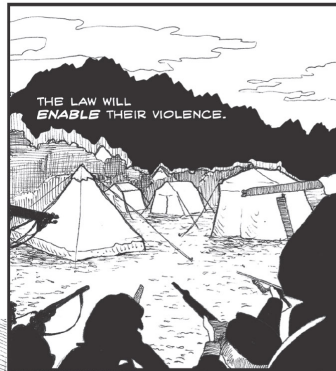


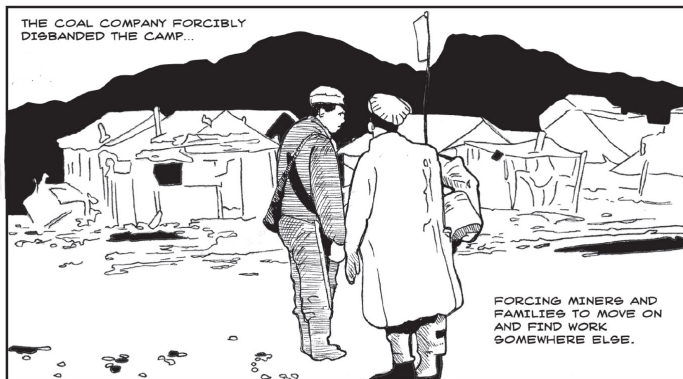


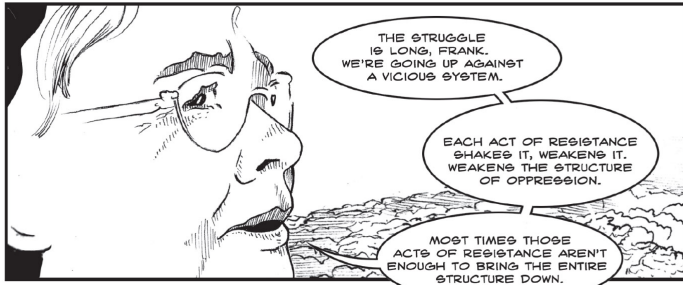


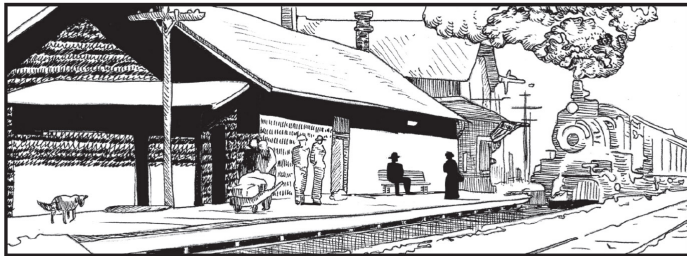
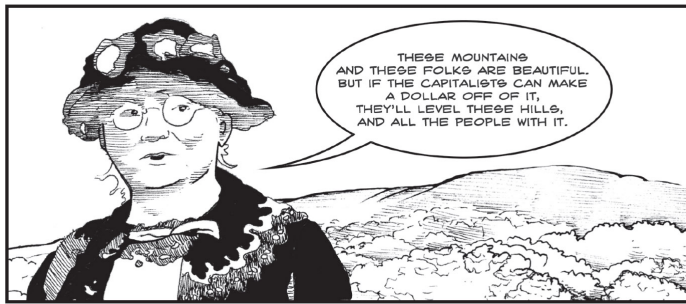


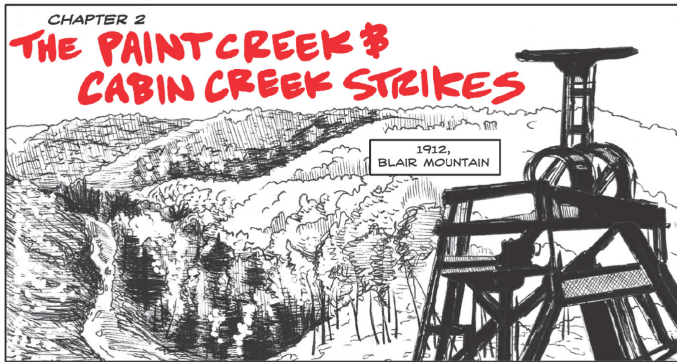




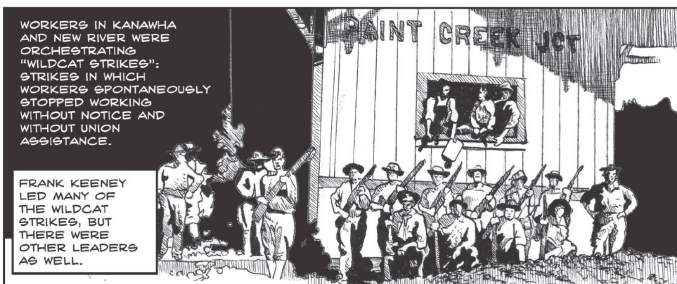


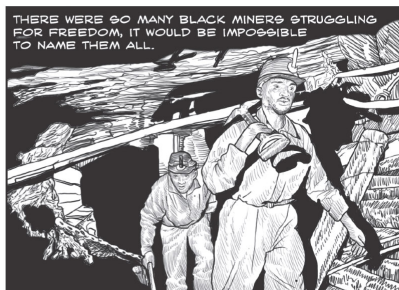
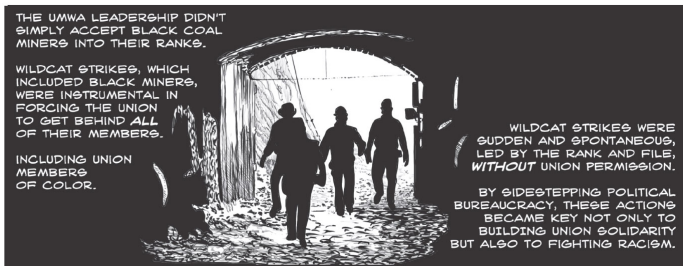






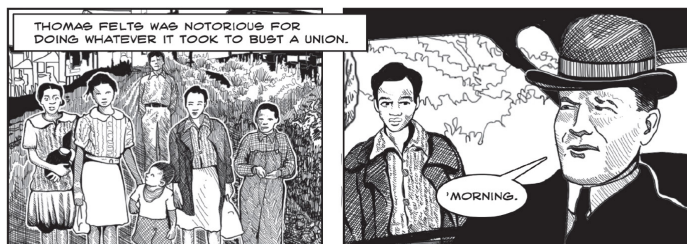
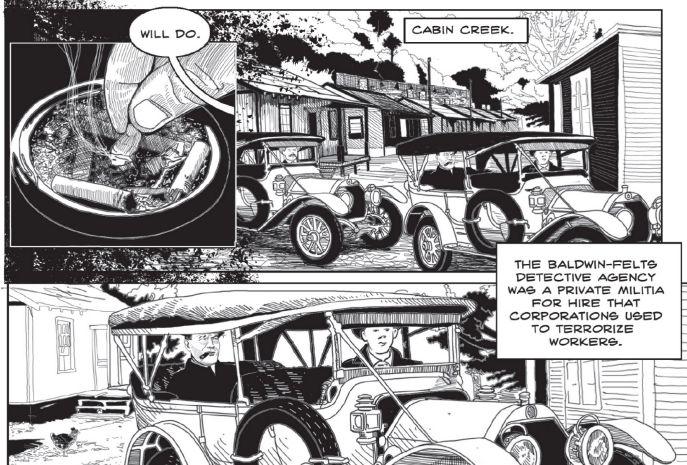
THE PAINT-CABIN CREEK STRIKE BEGAN IN APRIL 1912. THE STRIKE WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AS "THE DEADLIEST STRIKE IN AMERICAN HISTORY" OR "THE STRIKE THAT STARTED A WAR." BOTH OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS ARE TRUE.

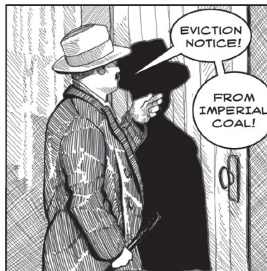




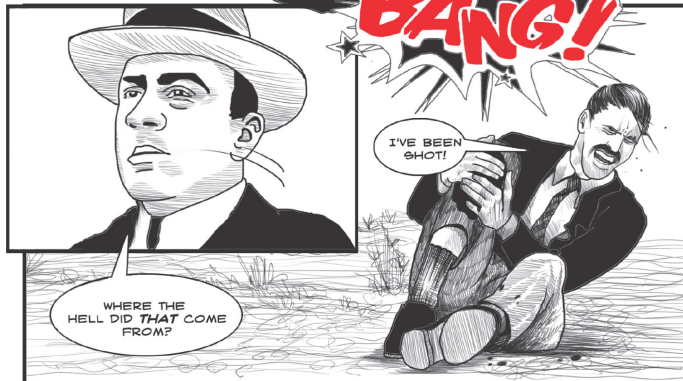


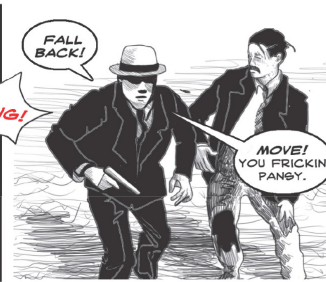
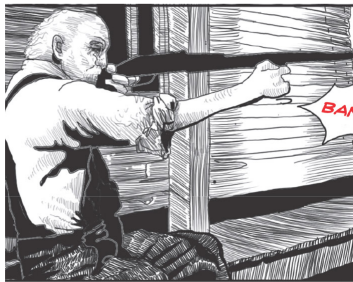
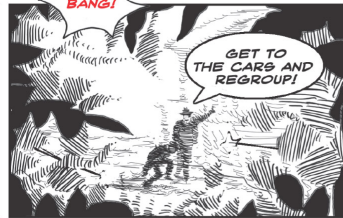


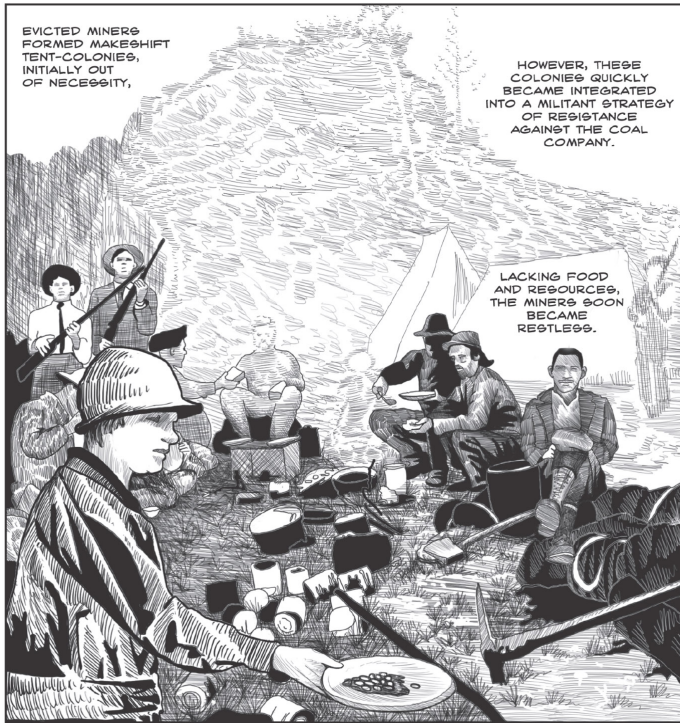




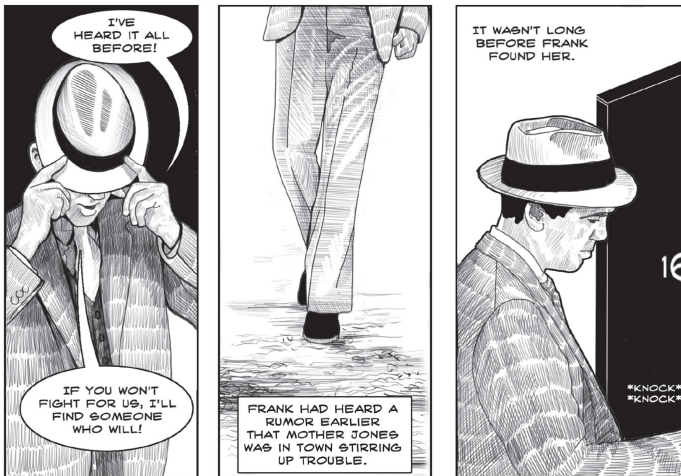
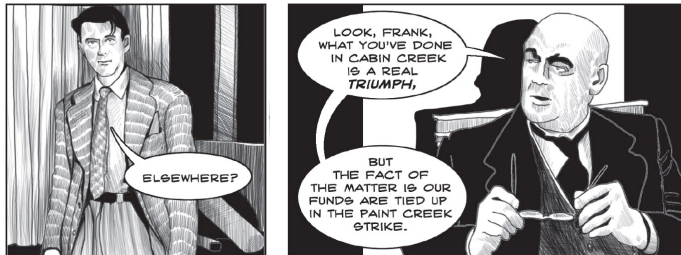


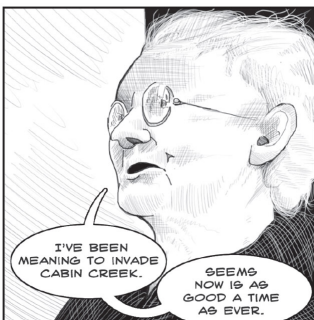


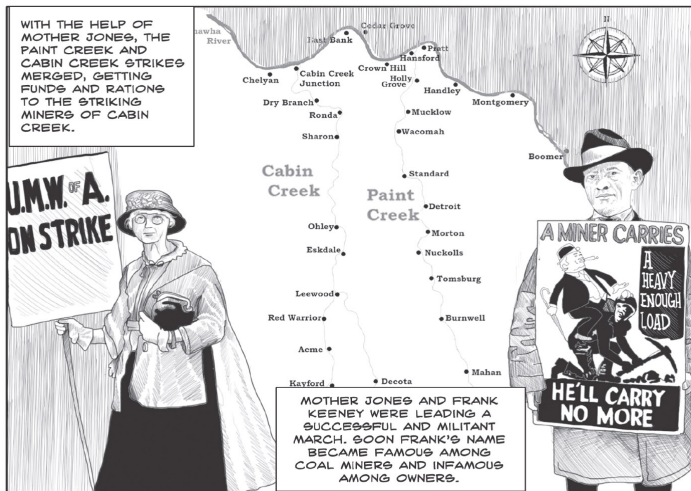




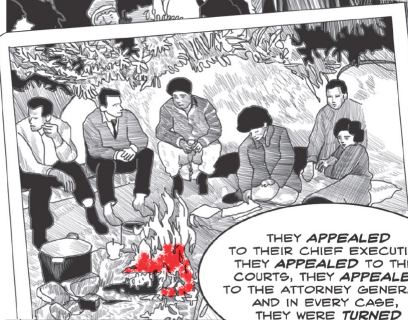






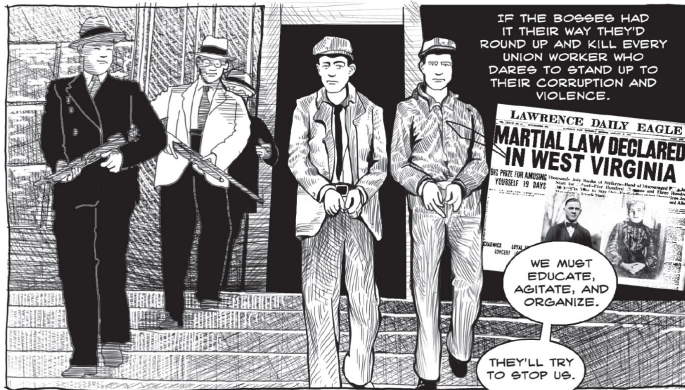


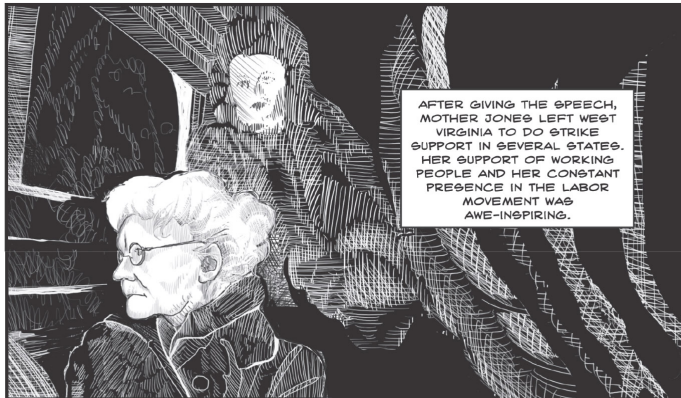
MOTHER JONES HAD TO HEAD OUT TO COLORADO TO HELP SOME MINERS IN THAT AREA. MINERS IN COLORADO WERE DEALING WITH A SIMILAR STRUGGLE AS THE MINERS IN WEST VIRGINIA. BUT BEFORE SHE WENT SHE GAVE A SPEECH IN CHARLESTON.



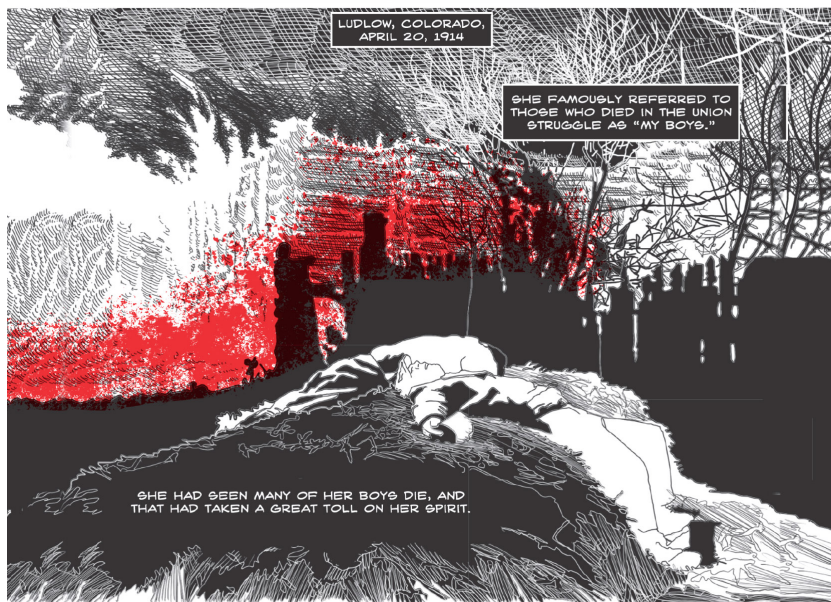
THIS ENTIRE SYSTEM IS CORRUPT TO THE CORE.







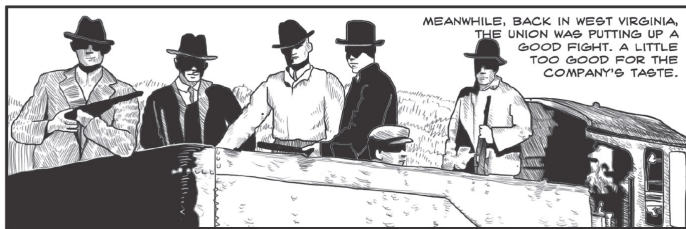
AFTER GIVING THE SPEECH,
MOTHER JONES LEFT WEST
VIRGINIA TO DO STRIKE
SUPPORT IN SEVERAL STATES.
HER SUPPORT OF WORKING
PEOPLE AND HER CONSTANT
PRESENCE IN THE LABOR
MOVEMENT WAS
AWE-INSPIRING.



LUDLOW, COLORADO,
APRIL 20, 1914

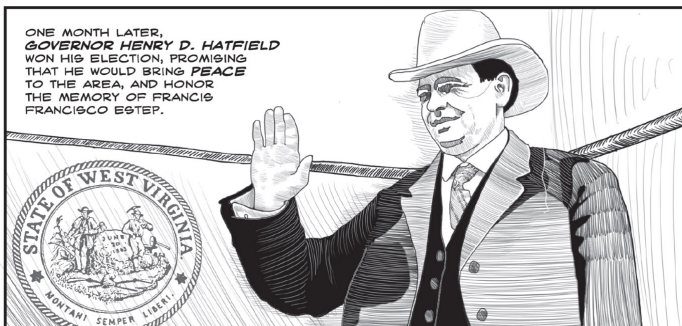
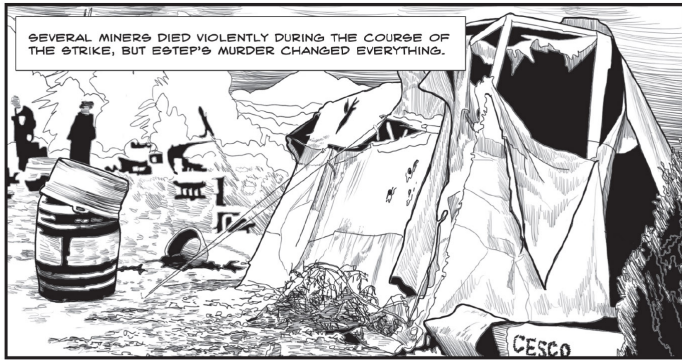
SHE FAMOUSLY REFERRED TO
THOSE WHO DIED IN THE UNION
STRUGGLE AS "MY BOYS."

SHE HAD SEEN MANY OF HER BOYS DIE, AND
THAT HAD TAKEN A GREAT TOLL ON HER SPIRIT.





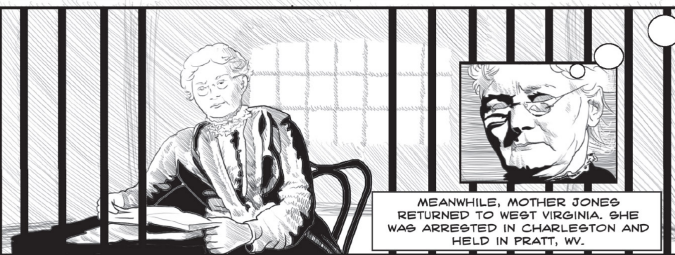




IN APRIL, GOVERNOR HATFIELD OFFERED A RESOLUTION TO THE MINERS. IT WAS A SIMPLE ONE: MINERS WOULD ABANDON THEIR WEAPONS AND GO BACK TO WORK, AND IN RETURN, ALL THE JAILED STRIKING MINERS WOULD BE RELEASED. THEY COULD ACCEPT THIS RESOLUTION OR THEIR UNION WOULD FACE MORE RESTRICTIONS.



THE MAJORITY OF THE UNION DID NOT WANT TO ACCEPT GOVERNOR HATFIELD'S RESOLUTION. BUT THE UNION BELIEVED IT WAS THE BEST DEAL THEY COULD GET, AND THEY APPROVED IT.



MEANWHILE, MOTHER JONES RETURNED TO WEST VIRGINIA. SHE WAS ARRESTED IN CHARLESTON AND HELD IN PRATT, WV.



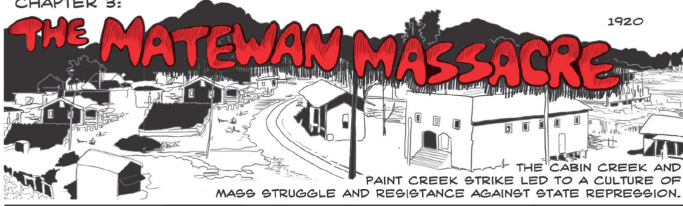




CHAPTER 3:

THE MATEWAN MASSACRE

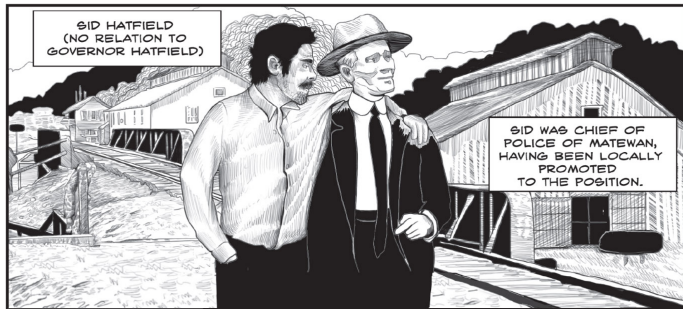
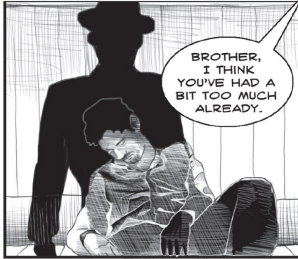
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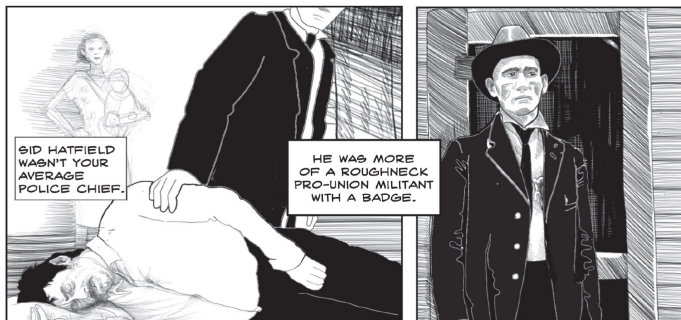
THE CABIN CREEK AND PAINT CREEK STRIKE LED TO A CULTURE OF MASS STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE AGAINST STATE REPRESSION.

EVEN THOUGH MOTHER JONES AND FRANK KEENEY AREN'T IN MINGO COUNTY, THEIR FIGHT FOR UNIONIZATION OF WEST VIRGINIA MINERS RAGES ON.

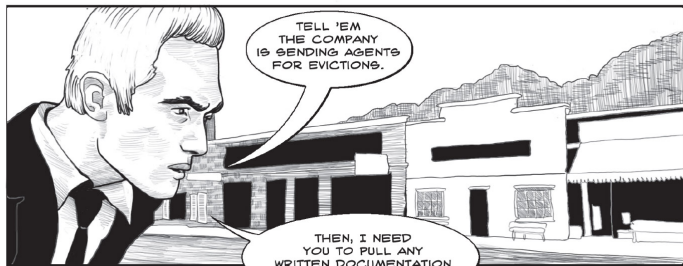


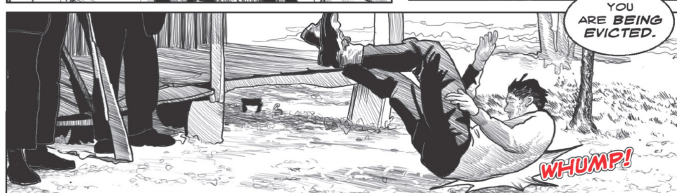




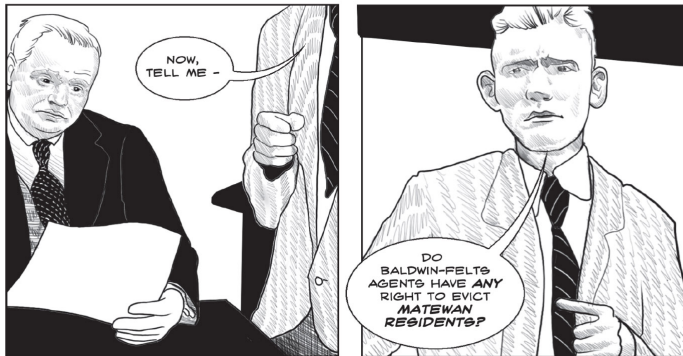




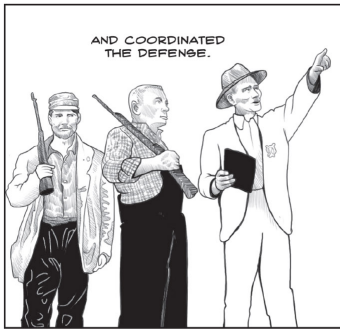






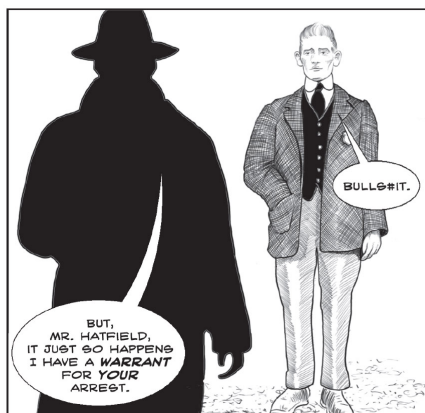
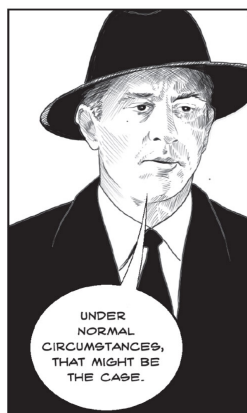
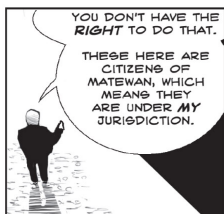








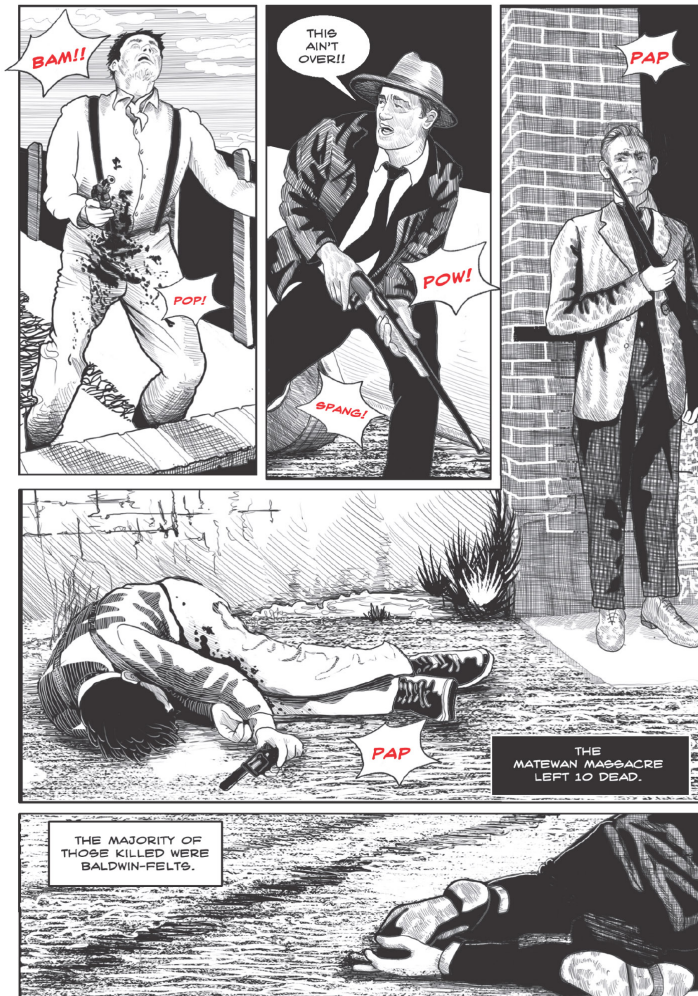


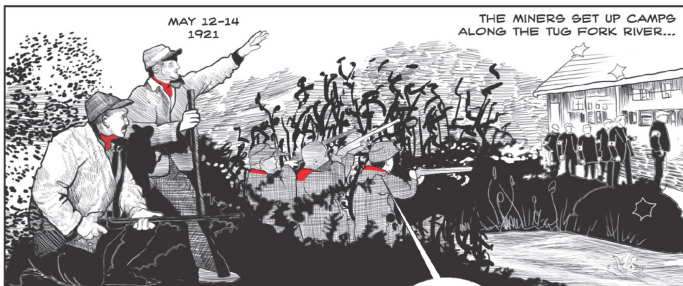
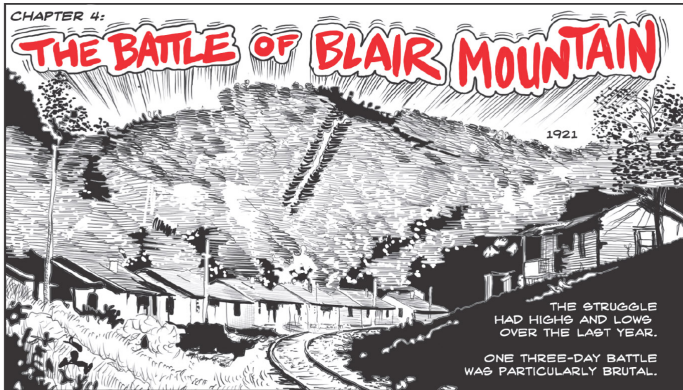




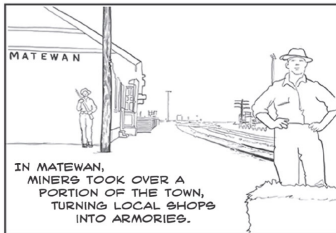












IN MATEWAN, MINERS TOOK OVER A PORTION OF THE TOWN, TURNING LOCAL SHOPS INTO ARMORIES.

ELI KEMP WAS AN ORGANIZER AND A MILITANT.

EVEN THOUGH NEARLY 25 PERCENT OF MINERS PARTICIPATING IN UNION ORGANIZING WERE BLACK, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION WAS RAMPANT BOTH IN THE MINES AND WITHIN THE UNION.



IT WAS THE ANTIRACIST RANK-AND-FILE MEMBERS AND BLACK WORKERS WHO LED THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL EMANCIPATION WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT.



THIS HIDEOUS CONTRAPTION IS A WINCHESTER 1893 SHOTGUN.

IF YOU HOLD THE TRIGGER DOWN WHILE YOU PUMP, A ROUND WILL GO OFF AS SOON AS A SHELL HITS THE CHAMBER.

THE BLACK ORGANIZERS FOUGHT NOT ONLY FOR SOLIDARITY, BUT FOR THEIR OWN LIVES AND FREEDOM.

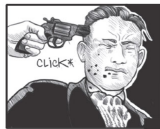
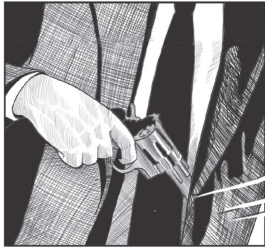
MEANING, YOU CAN PUMP OUT ALL YOUR ROUNDS WHILE KEEPING YOUR FINGER ON THE TRIGGER.

IS IT PRACTICAL? NOT REALLY.



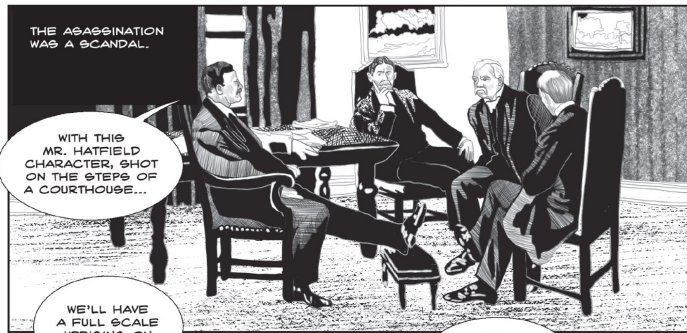
BUT IT SURE MAKES A LOT OF NOISE.

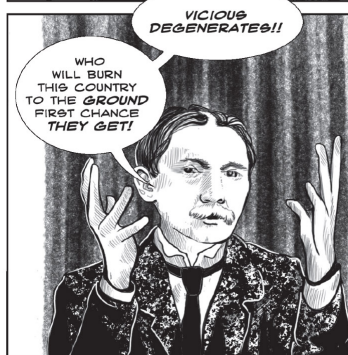
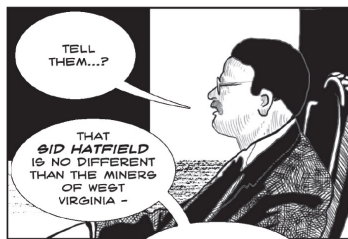


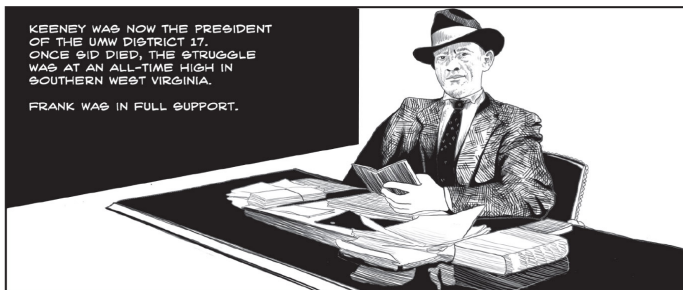
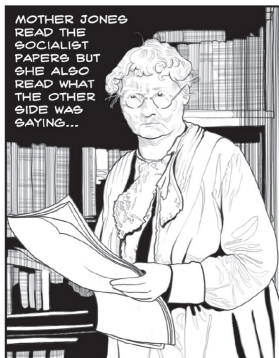
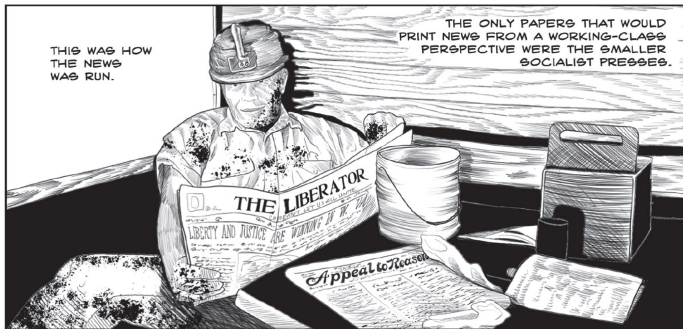


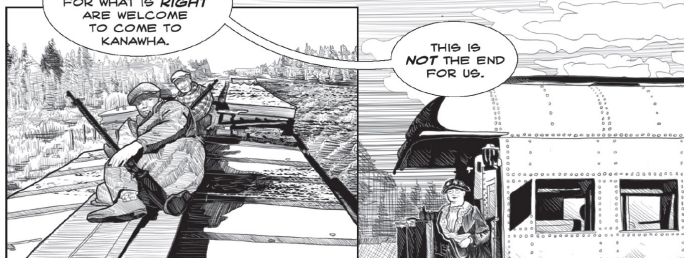
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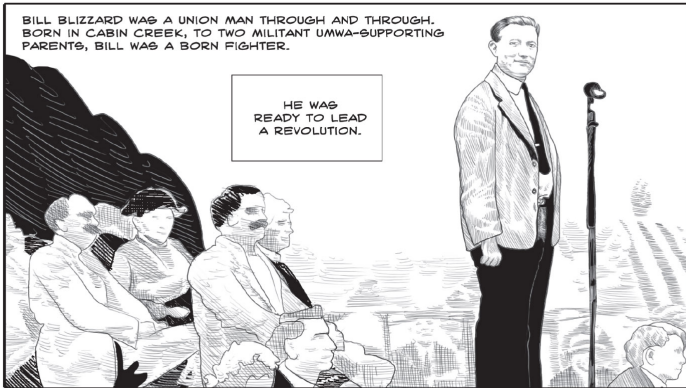


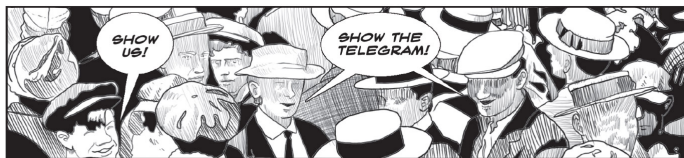


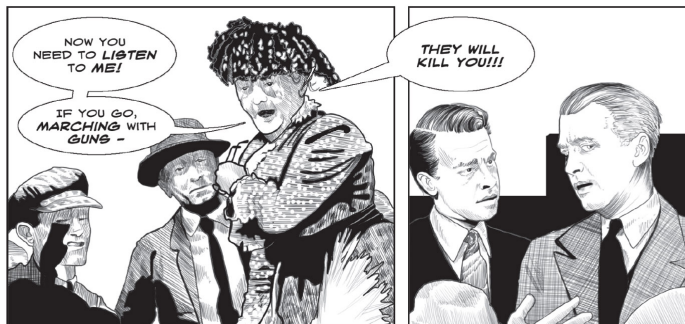






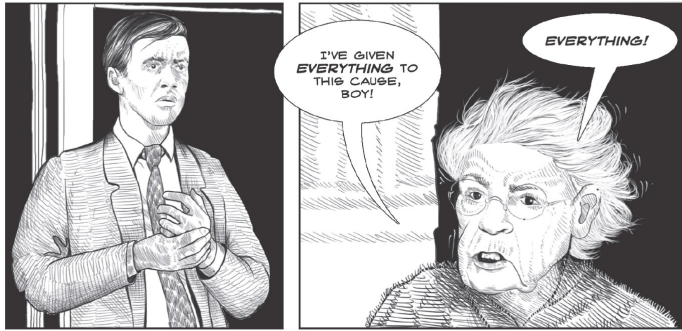














THE FIGHT WOULD TAKE PLACE,
AND IT WOULD BE A BIG ONE.



THE MINERS' "MARCH TO MINGO" BEGAN AS THEY WALKED SOUTH FROM MARMET TO THE
LOGAN COUNTY LINE, THEIR RANKS SWELLING TO AROUND TEN TO TWELVE THOUSAND.

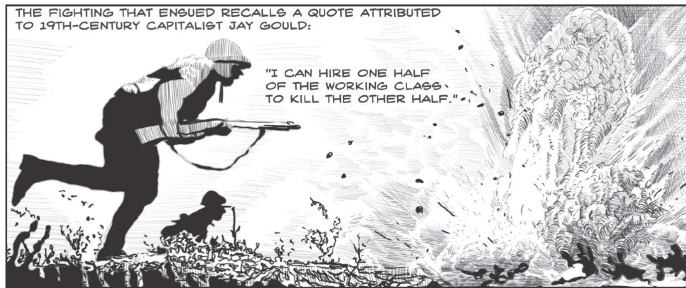
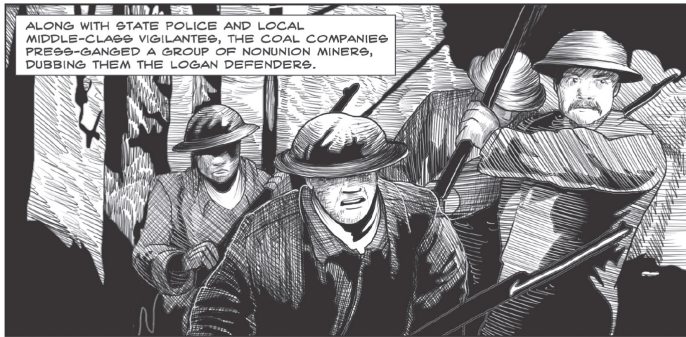




A POWERFUL FORCE OF
CAPITALIST TERROR,

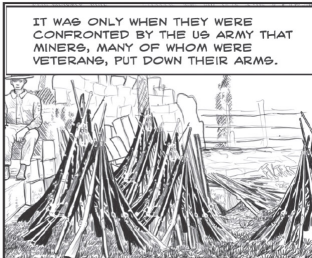
ORCHESTRATED TO
STOP THEM FROM
EVEN REACHING MINGO.







WE CAN TAKE COMFORT IN THE TRIUMPH
THAT THE MINERS REFUSED TO SURRENDER
TO THE CAPITALIST FORCES.



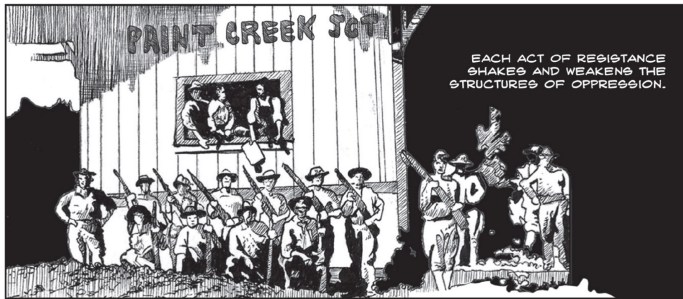
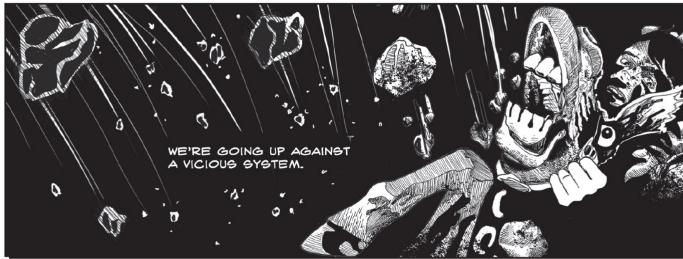
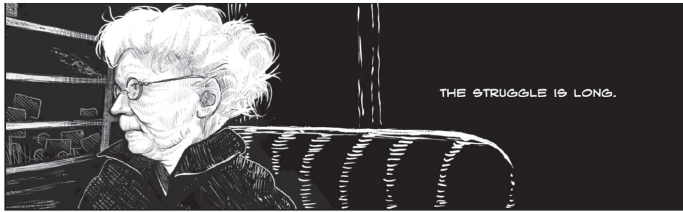
IT WAS ONLY WHEN THEY WERE
CONFRONTED BY THE US ARMY THAT
MINERS, MANY OF WHOM WERE
VETERANS, PUT DOWN THEIR ARMS.



SOME STASHED
THEIR WEAPONS
AND ABANDONED
THE FIGHT.



BILL BLIZZARD AND HIS MEN FOUGHT
BRAVELY BUT ULTIMATELY AGREED TO A
CEASEFIRE. OVER 500 MINERS WERE
BROUGHT UP ON CHARGES.



THE BATTLE OF BLAIR MOUNTAIN WAS THE LARGEST LABOR UPRISING
IN UNITED STATES HISTORY AND THE LARGEST ARMED UPRISING
SINCE THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

AT ITS CORE, THE REVOLT
WAS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO
THE INHUMAN STRUCTURES
OF INDUSTRIAL POWER.

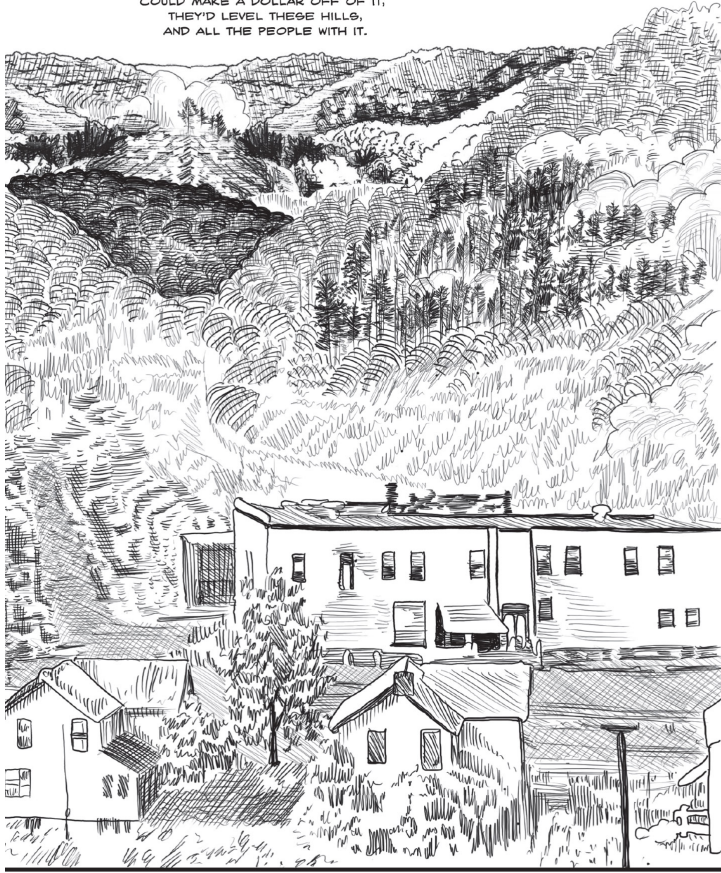


THERE IS A HIDDEN HISTORY IN THE US.
IT IS THE HISTORY OF ORDINARY PEOPLE STANDING UP TO FIGHT
THE INJUSTICE OF A CAPITALIST SYSTEM THAT IS WILLING
TO USE EXTRAORDINARY VIOLENCE TO PROTECT PROFITS.



THESE MOUNTAINS,
AND THESE FOLKS ARE BEAUTIFUL...

BUT IF THE CAPITALISTS
COULD MAKE A DOLLAR OFF OF IT,
THEY'D LEVEL THESE HILLS,
AND ALL THE PEOPLE WITH IT.



Afterword

Paul Buhle

This is a premier work of the graphic novel enterprise, written and drawn with such crispness and historical accuracy that it will enlighten readers of any age, whether already informed of these events or new to them. It is also the first of its kind. Its creators have, we can say with confidence, cinematic as much as scholarly precursors in mind, but also the remarkable efforts of ordinary West Virginians (and friends) to keep alive the memory of something that powerful people would rather forget.

It is revealing to look at the embattled history of stories about labor organizing in a parallel medium: cinema. *Salt of the Earth* (1954), by the account of the filmmakers themselves, constituted an effort of the Hollywood left not only to make a comeback after many had been blacklisted or imprisoned for refusing to answer questions from the House Committee on Un-American Activities but also to tell the story of an interracial struggle led by women, after a heavily gendered struggle among the miners' union ranks. Never before had such a film been made. The US government conspired to deport the leading actor to Mexico before the film could be completed, and pressure on movie theaters from right-wing forces made its public showing virtually impossible. Young Pauline Kael made a name for herself by denouncing the film as un-American, a veritable Communist conspiracy.

The Molly Maguires (1970), directed by erstwhile blacklist victim Martin Ritt and scripted by fellow blacklisted Walter Bernstein—soon famed as director of *The Front* (1976), a drama about the Hollywood blacklist—anticipated some of the stir of Ritt's vastly successful union saga *Norma Rae* (1979). It had little of the success. The saga of a nineteenth-century Irish-American plot against a Pennsylvania coal company received admiring attention in particular for the camerawork of James Wong Howe, but failed at the box office, largely drawing the snarls of hostile critics, including (once again) Pauline Kael.

John Sayles's *Matewan* (1987), perhaps seizing in part the Hollywood interest in Ritt's heavily publicized, also impending production, comes closest to our own subject. Novelist and social critic on the left, Sayles remains sui generis as an American filmmaker, closer in spirit to Britain's Ken Loach and others elsewhere committed to exposing and ending capitalism. His aim in this film is sure. A town's leading officials conspire against a struggle

embracing a possible interracial coalition, thus threatening central mechanisms of American capitalism's ability to divide and conquer. One could argue that Sayles recuperated what the Hollywood left and US cinema at large had lost when *Salt of the Earth* was banished a quarter century earlier.

Matewan, received by critics with great enthusiasm, nevertheless proved to be a notable box office flop, perhaps because of the extreme care given by the director to the detail of the depiction (it might have been a shorter film), more likely the absence of a burning romance of the typical Hollywood kind at the center of the plot. Our volume tells a rather different story, with much the same intent as Sayles but on a far broader canvas.

Devoted scholarship of the events themselves had to await generations after the 1910s–20s, when radicals did the job themselves as journalists in a scattering of left magazines and newspapers, meanwhile fighting off suppression in the First Red Scare. Most fascinating to us today may be the intense, subsequent public struggle over the history of these events. After a group of professional archeologists mapped out the battlefield in 2006, Blair Mountain gained a real distinction as a protected labor history site in the National Register of Historic Places.

This history nettled the coal giants. Legal teams uncovered gaps in the preservationists' presentation of evidence and successfully prompted the closure of the registration and of the associated preservation. Two coal giants managed to gain permits to literally blast away the remaining evidence. Only after a district judge ruled that the preservationists lacked the legal standing to make the case did a judge in the federal court of appeals return the case to the docket. At last, in 2018, the site was reconfirmed and added back to the National Register. This decision marked a victory of history over power, symptomatic of what radical historians writing on virtually all subjects from the late 1960s onward had aspired to do for their chosen subjects.

Meanwhile, the larger story has slowly gained traction as an important part of US labor history at large. The crushing of the strike had a devastating impact upon the United Mine Workers (UMW) across the region. A job-killing recession in coal and the notoriously authoritarian leadership of UMW president John L. Lewis prompted efforts in the 1920s to reform the union from below. Failing in their reform efforts, supporters of the insurgency organized by the Communist Party then turned toward

creating an alternative, militant, and democratic coal miners' union. Lewis crushed the rebels once more, although dissent remained alive further west, mostly in Illinois, with the small, independent, and somewhat socialistic Progressive Miners Union.

This was only part of the story. As the miners struggled in the Depression, with a strike in Harlan County, Kentucky—a famed moment of labor culture as well—the moment had almost arrived for industrial unionism across much of the nation. In the 1930s the Congress of Industrial Organizations, a federation of industrial unions, was formed and achieved early successes with the United Auto Workers organizing sit-down strikes first in the South and then, famously, in Flint, Michigan. Lewis's own UMW became the pillar of strength in the new unionism, adding the resources and energy required to set off the steelworkers in their successful quest to generalize industrial-wide unionization. That Lewis, a registered Republican, became the leader of the most democratic labor impulse in recent history, or that he had to join hands with the labor militants of the Communist Party, albeit very quietly, offered ironies lost on no one.

Lewis himself, in the early years of the Second World War, defied even the hugely popular president, Franklin Roosevelt, refusing to return “his” miners to their work until a decent contract arrived to their communities. Lewis could not maintain the union drive or the wider labor dynamics amid the postwar Red Scare. Interracial unionism and “Operation Dixie” planned for the South both largely failed, as mainstream unions turned into timid supporters of American capitalism. Never again, in the three quarters of a century afterward, up to now, would the American labor movement have the power and influence that it had boasted in the middle 1940s. But Lewis had won lasting benefits for hundreds of thousands of miners, even making West Virginia the most unionized state during decades of national union declines.

More than that: coal miners had led the way in working-class struggles, a thought that lasts in US labor history, long after the decline in membership and importance of the UMW itself. It was natural that the miners should lead the way in labor culture, most especially in the music of working people. Long before Woody Guthrie excited audiences across the country, on radio and on records, the singing miners, their wives and families, had composed melodies and lyrics that thrilled class-conscious working people

and filled a large page of America's own original music. Even Gene Autry recorded "The Death of Mother Jones" in 1931. The same year, Florence Reece wrote the song "Which Side Are You On?" for the striking miners in Harlan, Kentucky. It has never left the songbooks, from labor and civil rights to the peace movement. Poetry of the miners and their supporters in the region has not reached so many, of course, but enriched literature, especially the literature of working people.

Today, groups of enthusiasts keep the story of the strikes, struggles, and unions in West Virginia alive and fresh. The West Virginia Mine Wars Museum, run largely by volunteers in Matewan, offers historical exhibits, conducts tours, gives seminars, and in 2021 cosponsored the largest state-wide festival of West Virginia state history ever held—in their own words "celebrating a battle of cross-racial solidarity for basic human rights."

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About the Contributors

Raymond Tyler (writer) is a comics writer from Appalachian Georgia currently residing in Nyack, NY. He's a longtime social justice and labor activist, bridging "history from below" with comics. Raymond's most recent work is the horror comic series *Amputation Capital*.

Summer McClinton (illustrator) is a painter and comic book artist based in the Bronx. She has illustrated twelve books, including the Xeric Award-winning *Thread*, Michael Demon's *Masks of Anarchy*, and Harvey Pekar's *Huntington, West Virginia "On the Fly."* She is an award-winning painter, illustrator, and art director whose comic work tends to favor notable historical figures engaged in the ongoing fight for social justice.

Paul Buhle (afterword), retired senior lecturer at Brown University, is the author or editor of many volumes on the left in the US and Caribbean, including the authorized biography of C.L.R. James, and in recent decades the editor of more than twenty historical, nonfiction graphic novels.

THE MUSEUM IS A MONUMENT TO THE DIGNITY OF WORKING PEOPLE AND OUR UNIONS

— Dave Coker, museum board member
and president of Professional Fire Fighters of Greensboro-IAFF Local 947



In the town of Matewan, the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum sits at the site of a historic battle which erupted in May of 1920, setting into motion a chain of events that led to the largest armed uprising in the United States since our civil war.

For decades after the subsequent 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, the stories of the Mine Wars were whispered around kitchen tables and bullied out of textbooks, surviving as a quiet legacy just under the surface of modern Appalachia. The West Virginia Mine Wars Museum preserves and uplifts the voices of the people who lived these stories of sacrifice, violence, and triumph.

Our independent people's museum is the result of years of work by historians, archaeologists, storytellers and artists, descendants and mine workers—many of them residents of coalfield communities. Positioned at the intersection of historical and contemporary struggles for justice in the coalfields, we bring visitors into a powerful reckoning with the unique history of human labor in the privatized coal camps of central Appalachia—and what it took to build dignity and respect where none was given.

Proudly offering the largest exhibition of Mine Wars history anywhere in the United States, we walk visitors through this legacy with compelling exhibits of archival photos and videos, first-person accounts, rare artifacts and replicas, and detailed timelines placing the events of the Mine Wars era in a global context.

Our work reaches beyond our exhibits to include an expanding archive dedicated to researching the Mine Wars and coalfield life. Solidarity Gallery bridges creativity and history through artists' interpretation of Mine Wars memory. New generations learn powerful truths through our growing collection of educational curricula and teachers' resources developed with educators from across the region. Courage in the Hollers, our public monument initiative, brings our work out into the landscape in which it happened.

We have proudly built a people's museum up from the mountain soil. The West Virginia Mine Wars Museum is a vital part of the legacy of human rights and justice in labor for working people, in Appalachia and globally.

WVMineWars.org  WVMineWarsMuseum  @WarsWV  @WVMineWars

401 Mate Street in Matewan, West Virginia

About us

Working Class History is an international collective of worker-activists focused on the research and promotion of people's history through our podcast, books and social media channels.



We want to uncover stories of our collective history of fighting for better world and tell them in a straightforward and engaging way to help educate and inspire new generations of activists.

Through our social media outlets with over one million followers, we reach an audience of over 20 million per month. So if you're on social media, you can connect with us in the following ways:

- Instagram: [@workingclasshistory](#)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/workingclasshistory](#)
- Twitter: [@wrkclasshistory](#)
- YouTube: [youtube.com/workingclasshistory](#)
- Mastodon: [mastodon.social/@workingclasshistory](#)
- Tumblr: [workingclasshistory.tumblr.com](#)

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About PM Press

PM Press is an independent, radical publisher of critically necessary books for our tumultuous times. Our aim is to deliver bold political ideas and vital stories to all walks of life and arm the dreamers to demand the impossible. Founded in 2007 by a small group of people with decades of publishing, media, and organizing experience, we have sold millions of copies of our books, most often one at a time, face to face. We're old enough to know what we're doing and young enough to know what's at stake. Join us to create a better world.



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These are indisputably momentous times—the financial system is melting down globally and the Empire is stumbling. Now more than ever there is a vital need for radical ideas.

In the many years since its founding—and on a mere shoestring—PM Press has risen to the formidable challenge of publishing and distributing knowledge and entertainment for the struggles ahead. With hundreds of releases to date, we have published an impressive and stimulating array of literature, art, music, politics, and culture. Using every available medium, we've succeeded in connecting those hungry for ideas and information to those putting them into practice.

Friends of PM allows you to directly help impact, amplify, and revitalize the discourse and actions of radical writers, filmmakers, and artists. It provides us with a stable foundation from which we can build upon our early successes and provides a much-needed subsidy for the materials that can't necessarily pay their own way. You can help make that happen—and receive every new title automatically delivered to your door once a month—by joining as a Friend of PM Press. And, we'll throw in a free T-shirt when you sign up.

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Your Visa or Mastercard will be billed once a month, until you tell us to stop. Or until our efforts succeed in bringing the revolution around. Or the financial meltdown of Capital makes plastic redundant. Whichever comes first.

Gun Thugs, Rednecks, and Radicals: A Documentary History of the West Virginia Mine Wars

Edited by David Alan Corbin

ISBN: 978-1-60486-452-6

\$21.95 288 pages

Strikes and union battles occurred throughout American industry during the early part of the twentieth century, but none of these stories compare to the West Virginia Mine Wars of 1912 and 1921. These two workers' rebellions quickly drew national attention to an area known principally for its "black gold," the coal that was vital for U.S. factories, power plants, and warships of that age.

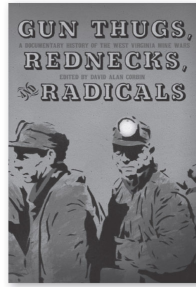
In 1912, miners struck against the harsh conditions in the work camps of Paint and Cabin Creeks and coal operators responded with force. The ensuing battles caused the West Virginia governor to declare martial law, prompting Samuel Gompers to dub the state "Russianized West Virginia [where] the people can be naught but serfs."

There was little improvement in working conditions by 1921, when another army—thousands of union miners—went up against similar numbers of state police, local deputies, and paid company guards. The weeklong Battle of Blair Mountain ended only after President Warren Harding sent 2,000 U.S. troops and a small unit of bombers to pacify the region.

Gun Thugs, Rednecks, and Radicals tells the story of these union battles as seen by the leaders, rank-and-file participants, and the journalists who came to West Virginia to cover them for papers including *The Nation* and the *New York Times*.

Union leaders like Gompers, Frank Keeney, Fred Mooney, Bill Blizzard, and Mother Jones discuss the lives and struggles of the miners for their union. The book also contains articles, speeches, and personal testimony heard by two U.S. Senate committees sent to investigate West Virginia's labor problems. In this testimony, miners and their family members describe life and work in the coal camps, telling why they participated in these violent episodes in West Virginia history.

Special attention is given to the role of Huntington's own radical newspaper, *The Socialist and Labor Star*, a forgotten monument in the history of American heresy and radicalism.



Working Class History: Everyday Acts of Resistance & Rebellion

With a Foreword by Noam Chomsky

ISBN: 978-1-62963-823-2 (paperback)

978-1-62963-887-4 (hardcover)

\$20.00/\$59.95 352 pages

History is not made by kings, politicians, or a few rich individuals—it is made by all of us. From the temples of ancient Egypt to spacecraft orbiting Earth, workers and ordinary people everywhere have walked out, sat down, risen up, and fought back against exploitation, discrimination, colonization, and oppression.

Working Class History presents a distinct selection of people's history through hundreds of "on this day in history" anniversaries that are as diverse and international as the working class itself. Women, young people, people of color, workers, migrants, Indigenous people, LGBT+ people, disabled people, older people, the unemployed, home workers, and every other part of the working class have organized and taken action that has shaped our world, and improvements in living and working conditions have been won only by years of violent conflict and sacrifice. These everyday acts of resistance and rebellion highlight just some of those who have struggled for a better world and provide lessons and inspiration for those of us fighting in the present. Going day by day, this book paints a picture of how and why the world came to be as it is, how some have tried to change it, and the lengths to which the rich and powerful have gone to maintain and increase their wealth and influence.

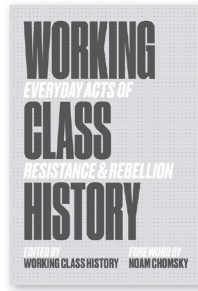
This handbook of grassroots movements, curated by the popular Working Class History project, features many hidden histories and untold stories, reinforced with inspiring images, further reading, and a foreword from legendary author and dissident Noam Chomsky.

"This ingenious archive of working class history, organized as an extended calendar, is filled with little and better known events. Reading through the text, the power, fury, and persistence of the working-class struggles shine. 'Working class' is broader than unions and job struggles, and rather includes all emancipatory acts of working-class people, be they Indigenous peoples fighting for land rights, African Americans massively protesting police killings, anticolonial liberation movements, women rising up angry, or mass mobilizations worldwide against imperialist wars. It is international in scope as is the working class. This is a book the reader will open every day to recall and be inspired by what occurred on that date. I love the book and will look forward to the daily readings."

—Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, author of *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*

"One thing most people in the world have in common—whatever our gender, race, age, culture, or condition—is that we have to work for a living, and most of us have to work for someone else. That means either we have to obey their will or find ways to resist it. This book provides a panoramic compendium of that resistance. I've been studying and writing about labor history for more than half a century, but I've never even heard about most of these thousand or more strikes, uprisings, protests from around the world—or about the violence that was so often used against them. I've found this book an easy and fun way to fill that gap."

—Jeremy Brecher, author of *Strike!*



Anarchy Comics: The Complete Collection

Edited by Jay Kinney

ISBN: 978-1-60486-531-8

\$20.00 224 pages

Anarchy Comics: The Complete Collection brings together the legendary four issues of *Anarchy Comics* (1978–1986), the underground comic that melded anarchist politics with a punk sensibility, producing a riveting mix of satire, revolt, and artistic experimentation. This international anthology collects the comic stories of all thirty contributors from the U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, and Canada.



In addition to the complete issues of *Anarchy Comics*, the anthology features previously unpublished work by Jay Kinney and Sharon Rudahl, along with a detailed introduction by Kinney, which traces the history of the comic he founded and provides entertaining anecdotes about the process of herding an international crowd of anarchistic cats.

Contributors include: Jay Kinney, Yves Frémion, Gerhard Seyfried, Sharon Rudahl, Steve Stiles, Donald Rooum, Paul Mavrides, Adam Cornford, Spain Rodriguez, Melinda Gebbie, Gilbert Shelton, Volny, John Burnham, Cliff Harper, Ruby Ray, Peter Pontiac, Marcel Trublin, Albo Helm, Steve Lafler, Gary Panter, Greg Irons, Dave Lester, Marion Lydebrooke, Matt Feazell, Pepe Moreno, Norman Dog, Zorca, R. Diggs (Harry Driggs), Harry Robins, and Byron Werner.

"60s counterculture, supposedly political, mostly concerned itself with hedonism and self-focused individualism, as did the underground comix it engendered. Jay Kinney's and Paul Mavrides' Anarchy Comics, to which all the scene's most artistically and politically adventurous creators gravitated, was an almost singular exception. Combining a grasp of Anarchy's history and principles with a genuinely anarchic and experimental approach to the form itself, Anarchy Comics represents a blazing pinnacle of what the underground was, and what it could have been. A brave and brilliant collection."

—Alan Moore, celebrated comic writer and creator of *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*, *From Hell*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, and numerous other comics and novels

"Anarchy Comics was an education I never got in school. I learned more deep truths about the way human megatribes operate (while at the same time being greatly amused by the superb art and writing) than from any textbook. Decades later, the insights I gleaned from these brilliant comics still affect the way I view global events."

—Mark Frauenfelder, founder of boingboing.net

"Thrill to this recently disinterred archeological fragment from a lost civilization about to be reinvented. Anarchy Comics is a dream come true."

—Mark Rudd, founding member of the Weather Underground and author of *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen*

"In the late '70s and early '80s we briefly had a comic voice that told our history (IWW, Spanish Civil War, Kronstadt), illustrated our culture (Brecht, communes, Yippies), and skewered our nemeses (Lenin, Mao, Trotsky), all with a large but necessary dose of self-deprecating humor. That was Anarchy Comics, and finally we can read it again!"

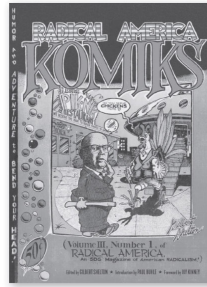
—Josh MacPhee, co-editor of *Signal*, founder of justseeds.org

Radical America Komiks

Edited by Gilbert Shelton with an Introduction by Paul Buhle and a Foreword by Jay Kinney

ISBN: 978-1-62963-567-5

\$14.95 64 pages



"Underground comix," an artistic expression of rambunctious rebellion in the Vietnam War era, were exploding in 1969 when *Radical America*, a journal affiliated with Students for a Democratic Society, published a memorable comic art edition. Its principal artist and editor, Gilbert Shelton, whose Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers would be enjoyed in many editions across the world, brought to the project his Texas pals Frank Stack and Jack Jackson. Also on hand, among others, were Chicago comics innovators Jay Lynch and Skip Williamson. Together, these and other contributors issued a veritable artistic manifesto: a new vernacular art had arrived!

A half century after its original appearance, *Radical America Komiks* retains its rebellious spirit and its rollicking humor. Dopey but also militantly antimilitarist, the comics in this reprinted volume speak to the ideas, sentiments, and artistic experiments of a generation.

Longtime underground artist Jay Kinney, coeditor of the satirical series *Young Lust* and *Anarchy Comics*, adds a foreword, and *Radical America* editor Paul Buhle offers an extensive introduction to the saga of comic art, radical and otherwise.

"Radical America Komiks was the funniest issue of that whole series of New Left magazines because it included the best cartoonists in the underground. Gilbert Shelton, master humorist, creator of the Furry Freak Brothers, edited the extra-thick comic book as one of the earliest projects at his fledgling company Rip Off Press. Nothing like funnies to liven up political discussions."

—Patrick Rosenkranz, author of *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution*

"Radical America Komiks is a treasury of Austin's radical artists from the 1960s and '70s, especially Gilbert Shelton, truly a global figure of comix innovation."

—Thorne Dreyer, founding editor of *The Rag*

"Radical America Komiks not only provides an unparalleled sense of how leftist politics and avant-garde narrative art intersected at the end of the sixties, it anticipates many of the innovations and tropes we associate with the alternative comics movement of the 1980s and 1990s."

—Kent Worcester, coeditor of *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium*

"There is a certain irony that Radical America Komiks is likely to be one of the best-remembered parts of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). That the visual and the satirical turn out to have a longer shelf life than the polemical would perplex, and more, the members of SDS who encountered the wonderful comix drawn and assembled by Gilbert Shelton. Viva comics, no matter how it is spelled!"

—James Danky, *Underground Classics Illustrated*

Strike! 50th Anniversary Edition

Jeremy Brecher with a Preface by Sara Nelson and a Foreword by Kim Kelly

ISBN: 978-1-62963-800-3 (paperback)

978-1-62963-856-0 (hardcover)

\$28.95/\$60.00 640 pages

Jeremy Brecher's *Strike!* narrates the dramatic story of repeated, massive, and sometimes violent revolts by ordinary working people in America. Involving nationwide general strikes, the seizure of vast industrial establishments, nonviolent direct action on a massive scale, and armed battles with artillery and tanks, this exciting hidden history is told from the point of view of the rank-and-file workers who lived it. Encompassing the repeated repression of workers' rebellions by company-sponsored violence, local police, state militias, and the US Army and National Guard, it reveals a dimension of American history rarely found in the usual high school or college history course.

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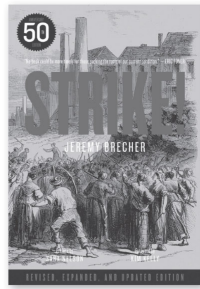
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"Splendid . . . clearly the best single-volume summary yet published of American general strikes."

—Washington Post

"A magnificent book. I hope it will take its place as the standard history of American labor."

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The Bootleg Coal Rebellion: The Pennsylvania Miners Who Seized an Industry, 1925–1942

Mitch Troutman with a Foreword by Staughton Lynd

ISBN: 978-1-62963-933-8

\$24.95 288 pages

Told with great intimacy and compassion, *The Bootleg Coal Rebellion* uncovers a long-buried history of resistance and resilience among depression-era miners in Pennsylvania, who sank their own mines on company grounds and fought police, bankers, coal companies, and courts to form a union that would not only safeguard their livelihoods but also protect their collective autonomy as citizens and workers for decades. Community and labor organizer Mitch Troutman brings this explosive and accessible American tale to life through the bootleggers' own words. Activists, scholars, and organizers will celebrate this story of the people who literally seized mountains and stood their ground to create the equalization movement, the miners' union democracy movement, and the Communist-led Unemployed Councils of the anthracite region. This epic story of work, love, and community stands as a testament to the power of collective action; a story that is sorely needed as communities today rise to confront neoliberal policies ravaging our planet.

"Troutman is a gifted storyteller. Combining rich imagery and down-to-earth writing with prudent historical research, he shows us what working class people are capable of when companies push them to the brink of starvation. What the bootleggers endured and accomplished is extraordinary. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better tale of democratic rebellion anywhere, particularly one with so many lessons for today. Modern-day coal barons beware: this book will turn readers into renegades."

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"Using local newspapers and oral history interviews, gifted historian Mitch Troutman tells the story of the miners as well as the women, children, storekeepers, truckers, and priests who participated in the bootleg coal rebellion. Great read!"

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"The most detailed account we have of coal bootlegging in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania in the Depression decade. It shows how unemployed miners took over unused mines, asserting and defending a right to mine and market the coal to support their families. Local government, the courts, and whole communities supported their efforts, writing a remarkable chapter in American labor history. We are in debt to Mitch Troutman for telling this remarkable story."

—Thomas Dublin, distinguished professor emeritus, State University of New York at Binghamton, and author of *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century*

